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September 4, 1894.

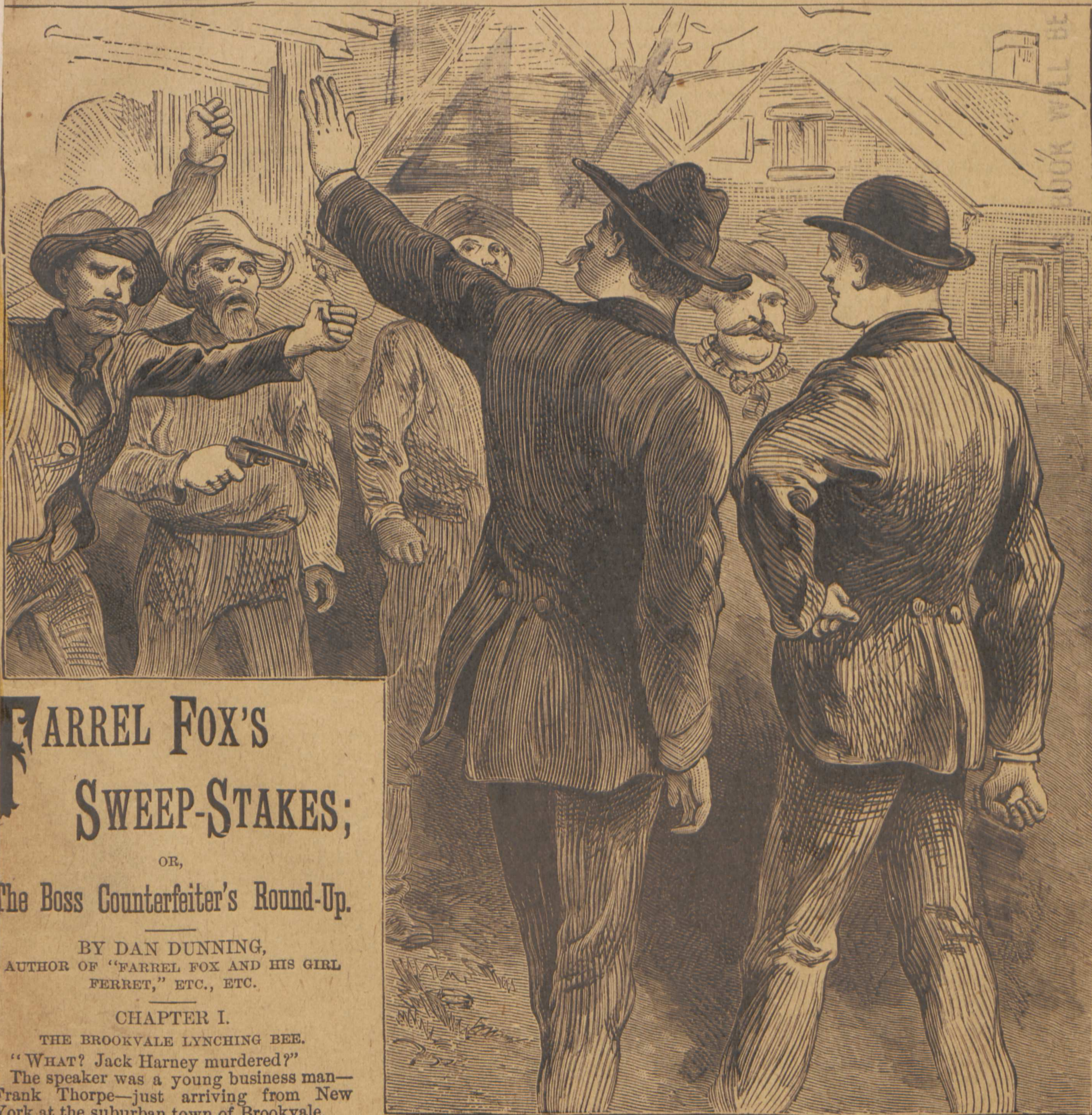
No. 893.

\$2.50  
a Year.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS.  
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Price,  
5 cents.

Vol. XXXV.



## FARREL FOX'S SWEEP-STAKES;

OR,

### The Boss Counterfeiter's Round-Up.

BY DAN DUNNING,  
AUTHOR OF "FARREL FOX AND HIS GIRL  
FERRET," ETC., ETC.

#### CHAPTER I.

THE BROOKVALE LYNCHING BEE.

"WHAT? Jack Harney murdered?"

The speaker was a young business man—  
Frank Thorpe—just arriving from New  
York at the suburban town of Brookvale.

The person addressed was the local chief

"YES, YES! HAND HIM OVER!" ECHOED THE MOB.

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of police in citizen's dress who, eying the other sharply, replied:

"Yes, sir," adding in a kinder tone:

"You had better step into the carriage I have waiting for you."

"Waiting for me?" echoed the other.

A number of men had been gathering around the two, and their looks were anything but friendly to Frank Thorpe.

Noticing the ominous actions of the constantly increasing crowd, the chief said:

"Come, Mr. Thorpe! There have been threats of lynching—and I am sorry to say you are under arrest."

"Under arrest?" and the prisoner's eyes flashed indignantly at the chief, and defiantly at the crowd.

"And, so, they talk of lynching, eh?" he scornfully continued.

"They do—and mean it!"

"Very good! Then I'll walk!"

"Better not," warned the chief.

"I will walk, sir!" firmly replied the prisoner, and, as with flashing eyes, he faced the angry crowd, added:

"I want to give these fools a chance to see how much I care for their threats!"

But the chief, while admiring the pluck, would not run the risk.

"No, sir," he said. "I can't risk it—you must ride!"

It was too late, however.

"Come, chief, hand him over!" came the cry from one of the hitherto silent, but ominously gathering crowd.

"Yes, yes! Hand him over!" echoed the mob, and a score of men rushed forward.

The chief was powerless, and the next instant the prisoner, torn from his protecting grasp, was being hurried to his death.

Never popular because of his haughty, independent manner, Frank Thorpe received many a kick, and many a blow, from those who fancied he had slighted them in the past.

Bruised, bleeding and half-stunned by the brutal treatment he had already received, and was still receiving, the unfortunate young man was dragged through the main street toward the Town Hall.

Vainly the chief endeavored to restrain the mob. His threats were laughed at, and his entreaties were unheeded.

The whole police force consisted of but seven men, and only three were on duty.

What could the chief do?

On arriving at the agreed place of execution—a big tree in front of the Town Hall—preparations were made for the hanging.

A rope was quickly procured and thrown over one of the lower limbs of the tree. A noose was formed by an amateur hangman, and this being placed around the prisoner's neck, he was asked if he had anything to say.

It was only a matter of form. Somebody had said it was the proper thing at Western "lynching bees," so this mob agreed to follow the established custom.

Not that it mattered what the prisoner said. His doom was sealed; but the half-stunned, and already half-strangled victim made no response, and the order was given:

"Up with him, boys!"

As this order was shouted by the leader of the mob, there came a stern countermmand:

"Hold there! The first man who touches that rope—dies!"

This threatening countermmand was uttered in such thunderous tones, that the startled crowd involuntarily fell back as they turned to face a pair of shining revolvers in the hands of the speaker—a short, slim-built man of about fifty.

Before the mob recovered from its astonishment, the stranger continued:

"Release that man!"

The words were addressed to the chief of police, who quickly removed the noose from the prisoner's neck, and started with him for the jail.

The mob, however, did not propose to

tamely submit to be thus cheated of its prey, and rushed forward to recapture the prisoner.

"Halt!"

The stranger uttered but the one word.

Disregarding the order, the majority of the mob rushed on, and then the stranger's pistols spoke twice, each with lightning-like rapidity.

The rush was over. The four leaders of it had been hit somewhere below the hip, and were lying groaning near the man who had wounded them, and who now sternly warned:

"Next time, I will fire to kill!"

There was no doubting the warning, or the ability to fulfill the threat, and the crowd hung back irresolute.

Few men care to face sure death.

The jail adjoined the Town Hall, and, while the mob stood hesitating, the chief and the prisoner reached it, and stood at the door.

Seeing there was no further immediate danger, the little man turned from the crowd and walked toward the jail.

The very fact that the man who had cheated them did not hurry, did as much to restrain the angry mob, as the deadly pistols still exposed to view.

Two or three minutes sufficed to place the stranger with the chief and Thorpe, and the three entered the jail.

Then the mob broke loose, again.

Some of the more angry and excited men were for breaking into the jail, and hanging both the prisoner and his rescuer, but the cooler heads prevailed.

There was not a pistol in the crowd, while the chief and jailer each had at least one, and the stranger, as they knew to their sorrow, had two.

"But we can leave a guard here while the rest go home and arm themselves, and then about midnight we can break in the door," urged one of the hotheads.

"A good idea! Come! Who will stand guard?" cried the leader.

A dozen volunteers were quickly selected and placed on guard, with orders to ring the Town Hall bell if there was any attempt to escape with the prisoner, or by the stranger alone.

No alarm was rung during the night, and at about eleven o'clock men began assembling on the green in front of the jail.

There was no more noise. They were silent, determined, dangerous men, now—not the noisy mob of the early evening.

Every man of the lynchers—now including nearly every man in the town—was armed with either gun or pistol, and some had brought axes and sledgehammers.

At midnight the signal was given, and marching to the door, the lynchers hammered loudly for admission.

"Get away from that door, or some of you'll get hurt!"

It was the voice of the little man that uttered the threat, and recognizing it, the mob howled with rage.

"We want Thorpe—the murderer—and we'll have him by fair means or foul! Save bloodshed, chief, by giving him up!" urged the spokesman of the mob, adding:

"The door won't last ten minutes!"

"You're losing time. Why don't you begin?" came the voice of the stranger, again.

"Answer me, chief," persisted the spokesman. "Will you save bloodshed, or not? All who oppose us will be shot down!"

"You seem to be mighty careful about your own skin! Why don't you begin?"

It was still the stranger who answered, and unable longer to restrain his anger, the leader of the lynchers shouted:

"If you don't answer me, chief, the blood will be on your head! We'll begin in one minute! Will you give him up?"

"Nary a give," answer the stranger, adding:

"Chief's too busy playing poker with Thorpe and the jailer, or I'd call him for you."

This mockery, shouted through the key-hole, ended the parley, and two heavy sledges were brought to play on the door.

The door was heavy and well built, but the lyncher's threat was not an idle one, and within ten minutes it gave away.

With the crash of the falling door, or rather almost drowning it, came a loud explosion, and the leaders in the rush that was made, staggered back, some of them falling.

"That was only a pinch of dynamite. There's a pound of it waiting for you!" called the stranger.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE DEFENSE OF THE JAIL.

FOR a couple of minutes the lynchers stood irresolute. Then, either disbelieving the stranger's mocking statement, or so infuriated as to be careless of consequences, they needed only the call of the leader.

"Come on! I don't care if there's a ton of dynamite!"

He rushed through the door as he spoke, and with a yell the mob followed him.

If there was any dynamite it was not used; for it was the sharp cracking of a pair of revolvers that greeted the ears of the lynchers, and bullets that entered their bodies.

A half dozen men went down almost at the very threshold, but their companions rushed over them, firing as they entered, though the corridor being pitch dark, nothing could be seen.

Lanterns were quickly procured after the place was discovered to be in darkness, for after the first few shots were fired, the lynchers realized the danger of shooting each other.

"Now, boys, come along!" shouted the leader, waving his lantern overhead.

It was a splendid mark for somebody's pistol, and the next instant a bullet crashed through the lantern.

With an oath, the leader fired in the direction from which the shot had come, and a half-dozen others followed his example.

"Too late, gentlemen!" came the mocking information from another quarter.

"Quick! Fire!" yelled the leader, himself setting the example.

It was useless, however, as a taunting laugh—from overhead now—quickly informed them, and realizing that they were losing precious time in this "hide-and-seek" shooting, the leader cried:

"We'll attend to you after we get through with Thorpe! Come, boys! Search the cells!"

The order was promptly obeyed, and, notwithstanding the occasional smashing of a lantern, every cell was searched, but without finding Thorpe!

The fact that the chief of police, and the jailer, were also missing, quickly suggested the whereabouts of the prisoner.

"Carpenter (the jailer) has taken him to his own rooms!" cried one of the disappointed searchers. "These stairs here lead to the entrance to his apartments."

"Then we've got him safe enough, for the whole place is surrounded by guards, and there's no chance of escaping through, Carpenter's windows," asserted the leader, starting up stairs.

As has been stated, the jail was in total darkness when the mob entered, and lanterns were procured to search for the stranger at first, and then for the prisoner.

The stairway leading to Carpenter's apartments was spiral and very narrow—so narrow that the lynchers ascended in Indian file, Griffin, the leader of the mob, going first carrying a lantern.



Half-way up the stairs, a pistol-shot rung out, and the leader's second lantern was smashed. The man immediately behind him uttered a cry and fell back, carrying his companions like nine-pins to the bottom of the stairs.

"Come on!" yelled Griffin, with angry oath, and rushed up alone—and blindly.

Had Mr. Griffin's lantern not been smashed, he would probably have seen that commencing just three steps above there were wires stretched about six inches high all the way to the top.

But Mr. Griffin's lantern had been smashed, and his words had hardly died away, when he, too, came tumbling down stairs, having narrowly escaped breaking his neck, through falling backward.

While they stood wondering and undecided around their bleeding and unconscious leader, in the now well-known voice of the stranger, came the warning from above:

"This business must be stopped—now! There will be no more fooling. The next man who comes up these stairs will go down dead!"

There was a moment's irresolute silence, and then one of the lynchers whispered:

"Get him talking to you, Jack, and then we'll know where to fire at. He moves every time he speaks, so there's no use firing now."

"Hello!" yelled "Jack," in accordance with this treacherous plan.

But if the man above could not hear the plan, the clicking of the pistols, which he could hear, and see being cocked, as well as the whispering which preceded it, gave him an inkling of the game, and he made no reply.

Again and again "Jack" called, but getting no response became impatient, and suggested:

"Let's fire a volley, anyhow, and take the chances of a dash and the darkness to pull through."

"Will you head the dash?" dryly asked one of the others.

This was putting another face on the matter, but fairly cornered, Jack agreed to do so.

"Now, each fire three shots, and spread them about a foot apart," he added.

There were about fifteen men in the firing party, and for a minute there was a perfect storm of bullets in the direction of what was supposed to be the head of the spiral stairs.

Then, Jack started to make his "dash." He was not at all anxious for the honor of leading, and had been hoping that Griffin would recover and relieve him of it.

"Come along," he said, moving very slowly toward the stairs—for one supposed to be making a "dash."

Just then, shots and shouts from outside reached the party, and glad of the excuse, Jack suggested:

"Let's see what's going on. Perhaps they're escaping in another direction."

The others readily agreed to this. They were—usually—quiet, law-abiding citizens, and not being accustomed to that sort of work, may have been as pleased as Jack over the excuse to put off the "dash."

Hurrying to the door—the firing party being last to reach it—the forty or fifty men who had been inside the jail, were in time to meet a sheriff's posse of about equal numbers, armed with rifles, and those who could get a chance fled.

The Brookvale lynching was over—and a dismal failure from the outset.

Notwithstanding the guards, when the jailer saw the crowd gathering at eleven o'clock, he managed to slip through a rear door, and telegraphed the situation to the sheriff.

The latter, having locked up as many of the late lynchers as the jail would hold, placed a half-dozen of his posse in charge of

the jailer, and seeing everything was quiet went home, taking the rest of the prisoners, and Thorpe, with him—fearing another outbreak.

There was no danger, however, for as the mysterious little stranger remarked to the sheriff, "They were the sickest lot of lynchers that ever bit off more than they could chew."

"And I guess you were the toughest part of it, Mr. Fox," laughed the sheriff, adding: "Are you interested on his side?"

"I don't know, yet," replied the little man; "I haven't had time to ascertain on which side I am engaged."

"Well, I hope it's for the prisoner. He's a fine fellow, and I can't believe him guilty of such a brutal murder—especially of a man who was his nearest and best friend."

"But I must be off, Mr. Fox, so I'll bid you good-night—or rather, good-morning!"

"Good-morning!" returned Mr. Fox, and to himself: "And now, to report to my employer."

### CHAPTER III.

#### PREVIOUS TO THE LYNCHING BEE.

A FEW words of explanation before proceeding further with our story.

The cause of the feeling being so intense against the prisoner, Thorpe, as to turn the usually law-abiding citizens of a quiet country town, into an angry mob of would-be lynchers, was partly the brutality of the murder, and partly the popularity of the murdered man.

A little of the feeling, too, perhaps, was due to the unpopularity of Thorpe.

Then, too, the intimacy which had existed between Harney, the murdered man, and the prisoner, from almost the first day the latter had come to Brookvale, about five years before the murder, added to the enormity of the crime.

Harney was a wealthy, as well as an exceedingly popular, young man. His friendship was of no small value to Thorpe, but, in justice to the latter, it must be stated that that had nothing to do with the matter.

The people, however, did not understand the haughty young Southerner, (who was a really fine fellow,) and ascribed a selfish motive to the feeling he exhibited for Harney, and the latter's half-sister, Jessie.

Jessie Harney was a beautiful girl, several years the junior of Thorpe, (who was himself but twenty-eight,) and was much sought after at home and abroad.

Until a month before the murder, Thorpe had distanced all competitors for Jessie's favor, and although the former was comparatively poor, Jack Harney seemed pleased with what was evidently going to be a match.

Suddenly Thorpe's visit to the Harney mansion ceased, and he was no longer seen in Jack Harney's company.

People wondered and talked, as usual, but there the matter ended—as far as they were concerned—though soon a rumor began to circulate that something discreditable to Thorpe had been discovered by Harney.

On the evening of the murder, or previous to it, Harney and Thorpe met at the railroad depot, and to the surprise of the bystanders exchanged a few apparently pleasant words.

Later the same evening, still greater surprise was caused by seeing the former friends walking toward the spot where the body of Harney was found next day.

Thorpe had gone to business, as usual, about eight o'clock that morning, and when the body was discovered later in the day, much doubt was expressed as to whether he would return.

But as the body had been discovered in an out of the way spot, where it might have laid for weeks undiscovered, and it had been ascertained by telegraph that Thorpe was

really at his office, the chief of police decided to take the risk of not calling on the New York police.

He wanted all the glory for himself.

The chief did not put it that way, however, as may be imagined.

What he said to those looking for an arrest in New York was:

"Thorpe is almost sure to come back, and, anyway, I've sent a man to watch him. He doesn't expect the body to be found very soon, that's certain, or he wouldn't have left his cane there."

This sounded reasonable, and the committee that waited upon him agreed that it would be as well not to call on the New York police for the present.

"For, if he returns, we can take him to the Town Hall, and string him up without further trouble," whispered one of the committeemen.

This was expressing what all felt would be the proper way to serve the brutal and treacherous murderer of a confiding friend.

The weapon used by the murderer was a cane, which was found near the body.

The cane, which was covered with blood and hair, was immediately recognized as Thorpe's, but as if to make assurance doubly sure, the initials "F. T." were found cut into it.

As Thorpe had been seen carrying this cane when with Harney the previous evening, and as he was the last man seen with the latter, there was not the slightest doubt as to who committed the murder.

Thorpe had been tried and convicted in the minds of the people long before the coroner's jury declared him a murderer.

It was the inquest, however, that stirred up the attempt at lynching.

The treacherous murder in itself was bad enough, but when the inquest revealed the fact that the murderer had kicked and beaten, even jumped on—his unfortunate victim, as if death alone could not appease his bloodthirsty fury, the people became enraged.

"We will take the law in our own hands," they said, and soon it was well known throughout the town what was in store for Thorpe should he return—so well known that it reached the ears of Jessie Harney.

The information was given as a sort of consolation, but to the surprise of the consoling friend, Jessie appeared horror-stricken, and begged that the chief of police be notified.

"Oh, he knows all about it—everybody does," replied the friend.

"Then he will stop them, of course?" doubtfully questioned Jessie.

"Perhaps he would if he could, but he can't," was the nearly truthful reply.

"Oh, this is terrible!" cried Jessie, wringing her hands in agony.

Then, starting up with sudden energy, the bereaved girl exclaimed:

"Something must be done at once! Will you send a telegram for me?"

"Certainly! but, if it's to warn your brother's murderer, let me inform you that it will be refused at the office, or held there, by instructions of the chief of police."

"He did not murder my brother," firmly replied Jessie, adding:

"I am sure he is innocent, and something must be done to prevent the murder of an innocent man—one who would have died for poor Jack!"

The visitor stared in questioning astonishment, to which Jessie quietly answered:

"No, I have not lost my senses, and you must help me by sending a telegram—not to Frank—"

Jessie stopped blushing, but quickly recovered and went on:

"The telegram is to a gentleman who will be able to get here, I hope and believe, in time to save Mr. Thorpe."

The friend agreed to this, and in a few



minutes departed for the depot with the following telegram:

"FARREL FOX, No. — Broadway, New York.

"Come at once, John has been murdered."  
"JESSIE HARNEY."

There was no difficulty about sending this telegram. It looked as if the bereaved girl was sending for a business man—lawyer, perhaps—to look after her affairs.

As a matter of fact, however, Mr. Farrel Fox was a famous detective, better known as Farrel the Fox, and as the Man of Many Faces.

As the reader knows Mr. Fox fulfilled Jessie's expectations.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE FOX AND HIS CLIENT.

AND, now, to resume our story.

After leaving the jail the Fox went to report to his fair employer.

Jessie received the detective with a glad cry, and eagerly inquired:

"Did you—but I am sure you did succeed, Mr. Fox?"

If she expected to hear any details, she was sorely disappointed, for after simply assuring her that Thorpe was safe and uninjured, the detective said:

"And, now, tell me what you know about this affair."

Jessie complied by relating what she had been told of the first meeting between Harney and Thorpe, and of the second meeting, and walk toward the fatal spot, later in the evening.

Fox listened attentively—though his half-closed eyes conveyed anything but that impression—and when Jessie had finished remained silent for a few minutes, before asking:

"You know the cause of the coolness between your brother and his—friend?"

Jessie bowed—paling and flushing painfully—but remained silent.

"Ah!"

There was a world of meaning in the monosyllable, but it was kindly spoken, yet it only appeared to increase Jessie's distress.

This, of course, did not escape the keen-eyed detective, and he continued:

"I am sorry if my questioning pains you, Miss Harney, but I must know all the circumstances in order to be of any service to you in this matter."

Again the girl simply bowed.

"Do you believe him guilty?"

The question was put gently, and simply for the purpose of judging how much prejudice might be allowed for in Jessie's answers.

Fox was astonished at the prompt and confident answer:

"I am sure he is not!"

"Why?"

Softly, and with his half-closed eyes apparently fixed on the ceiling, Fox put the question, but he was disappointed.

"I can't answer you."

With downcast eyes, and flushing and paling cheek, Jessie made this statement, and even the cool Fox could not entirely repress a look of astonishment.

"Hum! I wish you had sent for me immediately," he said, more to cover the quite evident confusion of his companion than anything else.

"I should like to have seen him where he was found," explained Fox, "but, of course, you did not know until it was too late."

"Yes, it was too late. I did not know until he was brought home," replied Jessie.

"Was there anything missing—stolen?"

"Not that I am aware of."

"Was everything found upon him, returned with the body?"

"I don't think anything was disturbed.

Knowing him, they did not deem it necessary to search his clothing, for it was evident that as his watch and chain and pin were not removed, robbery was not the motive of the murderer."

Jessie was herself now, and watching her keenly, the detective asked:

"And what is supposed to be the motive?"

"I am—supposed to be."

Pale, but firmly—even scornfully—the girl answered the question, causing the keen-witted Fox to think:

"There must be some mistake about that theory, or else she was kept very much in the dark."

After a few minutes' reflection the detective asked to be directed to the death-chamber, and being informed that the murdered man had been placed in his own room, remarked:

"I know the way, and will go alone."

"Just to look at him?" hinted Jessie.

"To look at him, and to examine his clothing and papers," replied Fox, looking at her curiously, for he was struck by the tone in which the question was asked:

Jessie looked troubled. For a moment or two she seemed to be about to say something, but repressed the inclination, and turned away.

Slight as the hesitation was, the lynx-eyed detective had observed, and wondered at it.

"Queer!" he muttered, as he entered the death-chamber to begin his investigation.

It was queer—much more queer than he had the faintest suspicion of.

#### CHAPTER V.

##### THE FOX AND THE PRISONER.

WHEN Fox returned to the parlor, Jessie looked at him with an anxiously inquiring expression on her beautiful face.

"She fears something! What is it?" mentally commented Fox, and aloud:

"Was Mr. Harney very intimate with Mr. Harvey Dawson?"

"Not very—until recently."

"Ah! How recently?"

"About a month ago."

"About the time of the estrangement between—" began Fox.

"Yes, yes!" hastily interrupted the young woman.

"Queer!" again mentally commented the observant inquisitor, and producing a scrap of paper, asked:

"Have you any idea of what that means?"

Taking the proffered paper, the girl read:

"The affair must positively be stopped at once or— Well, you know the rest."

"It has gone too far already, and you have only yourself to thank for any pain it may cause."

"I can't say," Jessie declared, handing back the scrap of paper.

She was pale as a ghost and trembled like an aspen leaf, causing the Fox to doubt the sincerity of the answer.

"Which do you mean, Miss Harney? You can not, or you will not?"

"Don't press me too hard, Mr. Fox."

"Then you sent for me simply to save this man's life?"

"Not that alone. He must be proven innocent of that unjust charge."

"But, why keep me in the dark? If you know anything, why not tell it?"

Jessie shook with emotion, but her reply did not make matters any clearer.

"Ask Mr. Thorpe," she said. "It's for him to say, and perhaps he will explain."

"Well, there is nothing further for me to do to-night—or rather this morning. I will call on Mr. Thorpe later in the day, and inform you of the result."

"Thank you," meekly returned Jessie.

Much perplexed by the conduct of his fair

client, Fox sought his hotel—assuming the appearance of a man of thirty while on the way, by simply removing a chin-beard and wig both tinged with gray.

In the hotel bar, the detective heard the proceedings at the coroner's inquest repeated again and again, and noted that in whatever other respects the stories differed, the time of death remained unchanged.

"The doctor said he (Harney) was killed between eleven P. M. and one A. M."

That was the usual way in which it was expressed, and after hearing it repeated time after time, the Fox retired to his room.

"Well, that's something, at all events," he muttered as he threw himself on the bed.

"If this Thorpe did not do the job, he will be able to account for his whereabouts during those two hours."

Then his thoughts turned to Jessie.

"Hanged if I can make head or tail of her conduct in this affair! If I didn't know her so well, I'd think—"

"There's some infernal mystery behind all this! It looks clear enough—too clear to be taken on its looks."

"That girl's an angel—or as near one as a woman on earth ever is! It would be a sin to suspect anything wrong of her—and yet, there's a woman in everything?"

Thus musing, the perplexed man-hunter fell asleep, vainly endeavoring to persuade himself that Jessie's strange conduct was due to the grief and excitement caused by the death of her brother, and not to any guilty knowledge of the latter's brutal murder.

About ten next morning, the Fox visited the jail, and was immediately admitted to Thorpe's cell.

The prisoner did not, of course, recognize in the young appearing visitor his savior of the previous day, and the Fox introduced himself as a detective sent by Miss Harney.

Thorpe's face lighted up for a moment on hearing this, and he quietly asked:

"Well, sir: what can I do for you?"

Producing the enigmatical scrap of paper, Fox replied:

"Tell me, if you can, what that means?"

Thorpe looked curiously at the paper.

"Strange!" he muttered, but handed it back with a negative shake of the head.

"Can't you make anything of it?" impatiently demanded Fox.

"No, I don't think I can. It's a little too much for me."

"Of course you can account for your whereabouts for the past forty-eight hours?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"I hope there is no doubt of it, for that seems to be the only way to clear you, since the finding of your cane, covered with blood, beside the murdered man, and your having been the last one seen with him, makes a pretty tough case against you."

"My cane!" repeated Thorpe in an astonished tone. "Why, I loaned my cane to Jack—forced it on him—when we were parting."

"When and where?"

"About ten o'clock, near the Old Mill."

"Why?"

"Because he was not going home—was going to be out late, he said. As he never carried any weapons, and as I had a revolver, I offered him the choice of either. He declined both at first, but, finally, I persuaded him to take the stick."

Fox was favorably impressed by the frank way in which the prisoner told this story, but without showing it, quietly asked:

"Do you know where Mr. Harney's body was found?"

As expected, Thorpe's answer was in the negative.

"Then, let me inform you, sir, that the body was found at the very place you have mentioned—the Old Mill."

"Indeed? That's strange, is it not?"

"Very! And I fear the jury will think



so, when you admit leaving him at that very spot at ten o'clock. Where did you go after leaving Mr. Harney?"

"Home," was the slightly hesitating reply.

"Direct? When did you arrive home?"

"I arrived home at just twelve o'clock."

"Then you did not go straight home?"

"No."

"Ah! Well, it's another point in your favor. But, never mind that—go on!"

Thorpe looked inquiringly at the detective, and the latter feeling that this dullness was assumed angrily exclaimed:

"Surely, you must know what I mean! Where did you spend the intervening hour? It requires less than an hour to walk from the Old Mill to your home. Where was the other hour spent?"

"I can't tell you that, Mr. Fox."

"What! Do you mean to say you don't know?"

"I know where I was, Mr. Fox, as well as you do where you are, now."

"Were you alone?"

"I was not."

"Then, unless you, or the person in whose company you were, or both of you, are idiots, you are practically safe!"

"What do you mean—" hotly began Thorpe, but the Fox stopped him with an impatient gesture, and continued:

"The murder was committed between eleven and one. That is the positive declaration of the physicians at the inquest."

"Now, somebody must have seen you on your return home at twelve, and that person, and the one you were with during the previous hour, can prove something almost as good as an *alibi*—clear you, I firmly believe!"

"Yes, I suppose so," was the indifferent, even moody, response of the prisoner; but I cannot tell you what you desire to know."

"Hang these mysteries!" angrily exclaimed Fox. "You have a mysterious hour, and Miss Jessie has her pet mystery!"

"What's that?" sharply demanded Thorpe.

"About this Dawson, and that slip of paper."

"What about it—or them?"

"Well, you and Harney became estranged at the same time that Harney and Dawson became intimate. She knows why, I am certain, but refuses to tell."

"Strange!" muttered the prisoner.

"Not a bit more so than your mysterious appointment!" quickly retorted Fox.

"No, perhaps not," sighed Thorpe.

"Then, why not speak? I can do nothing against such a strong case if kept in the dark."

"I am sorry I cannot help you, Mr. Fox, but so it is. I know nothing of this Dawson, although I believe him to be the cause of the coolness between poor Jack and myself, and that paper seems to confirm it."

"You know to what it refers?"

"I do—partly—or rather surmise it refers to the acquaintance between Jessie—Miss Harney and myself. It may, however, refer to the friendship then existing between Jack and myself."

"It's the former!" confidently asserted Fox. "There's always a woman in the case; but, why should he interfere, and by what right?"

"I don't know by what right, but at one time he was somewhat attentive to Miss Harney."

"Ah! Now we have it! He was jealous."

"It may be so."

"It is so!" exclaimed Fox, adding:

"And he's the man that must be looked after in this affair; that is, unless that young lady or you, yourself, help me prove an *alibi*."

"Impossible! It can't be Dawson!" declared Thorpe, disregarding the latter part of the detective's speech.

"Why not?"

"Because he is the richest man in this

section, and of the highest social standing. Why should such a man commit such a crime?"

"I haven't said he committed any crime, but I'm going to keep an eye on him."

"And, now, good day to you—and I hope you soon will recover your senses, so that I may have a chance to save you."

## CHAPTER VI.

### A MYSTERIOUS CLIENT.

FARREL THE FOX left his stubborn client in an unpleasant frame of mind, and as he passed out into the street, muttered:

"They are well matched—a pair of confounded idiots! And the idea of his defending the man who was undoubtedly the cause of the trouble between him and Harney!"

"By Jove! The more I think of it, the more I am inclined to suspect that that same highly respectable gentleman is worth looking after."

"I'll make my report to the female end of this lunatic firm-to-be—for he'll surely marry her—and then ascertain where Mr. Dawson is to be found."

In accordance with this resolution, Fox lost no time in presenting himself before Miss Harney.

Jessie looked both anxious and inquiring, and the still wrathful detective responded by saying:

"I have learned that Mr. Dawson was at one time one of your admirers."

The young lady scarcely heeded the remark.

"Yes, yes!" she assented as her visitor paused interrogatively. "But surely, that is not all you have learned?"

"Nearly all. The rest is only more mystery, and not much of that—thank the Lord!"

"Mr. Thorpe left your brother fully an hour before the murder took place, but idiotically—that is, absolutely refuses to say where, or with whom, he spent that hour."

"What hour was that?"

"From shortly before eleven, until nearly twelve o'clock."

"You must make him tell you! Make him save himself!"

"I can't do it," quietly replied the Fox. "Perhaps you could?"

Jessie shrunk back with an expression of terror on her pale face, as she cried:

"No, no! Not me, not me!"

Fox stared in astonishment, and muttered some impolite words in addition to:

"If there isn't more mystery attached to this thing than anything I ever struck, I'll be hanged for the murder myself!"

Evidently mistaking this language for something reassuring, Jessie exclaimed:

"Thank you, Mr. Fox! Thank you!"

This caused a grim smile to play about the detective's lips, as he said:

"Well, that is all there is to say, except to find out Mr. Dawson's address. 'I presume you can supply that information?'"

"I am not sure, but if not at the old place, (which is called 'The Cedars,' and is about a mile below,) he will certainly be at the new place which I understand he has purchased—"

"And that is where?" asked Fox a little curiously.

"I can hardly say just how far it is, but it is in the other direction, and includes a building known as the Old Mill."

At length—and almost by accident—Fox had learned something which he certainly deemed of importance, and, regardless of the lady's presence, gave vent to a low whistle.

"Excuse me," he said in response to Jessie's surprised glance, "but do you happen to know that that is just where Mr. Harney's body was discovered?"

"No—is it?" was the wondering and alarmed response.

"Yes, that is just where the body was discovered."

Jessie made no remark, but it was evident that this information caused her fresh trouble, and arising, Fox observed that it was time for him to call on Mr. Dawson.

On leaving Jessie, Fox returned to his hotel, where, changing his clothing for a more fashionable suit than Farrel the Fox usually wore, he descended to the bar.

Business was dull just then, and the keen detective was soon engaged in conversation with the talkative barkeeper.

In a few minutes Fox managed to bring up the subject of the recent murder, incidentally mentioning the fact that he had been looking over the place where the body was found, and adding:

"It's a wonder somebody doesn't make use of that old mill? It doesn't look as if it would cost much to buy it."

"Oh, that old mill belongs to a big piece of property lying all around it, and I guess the owner keeps it as much as a curiosity as anything else," explained the barkeeper.

"Must have lots of cash," commented Fox.

"You bet! And knows how to spend it, too!"

Fox looked mystified, and in a dull way asked:

"Why in thunder shouldn't a man know how to spend his cash?"

"That's right enough for most men, but when a fellow's playing the strictly highly respectable game, while, on the quiet—"

Fox was fairly jumping with joy at the wonderful success he was meeting with that morning, but, just as the barkeeper was getting to the most interesting point, a sudden influx of customers called him away.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE FOX AND MR. DAWSON.

THE new-comers were out for a "good time," and after waiting a half-hour, Fox grew disgusted as he saw the barkeeper growing drunk, and then left the hotel.

"Well, I've got some good points, and can get the rest when that fellow sobers up. He said enough to show that this Dawson is a hypocrite—and that's something, but he knows more, and I will look to it that he says more when he is sober."

Thus consoling himself, the detective lounged along the road to the Old Mill.

Just as Fox reached the old, tumble-down building, a carriage came tearing along the road behind him, and glancing at the driver he saw a heavily-built, and rather heavy-faced man of about forty-five.

The latter glanced sharply at Fox in passing—much to the surprise of the detective who had never before seen him.

A short distance ahead, the carriage was turned with reckless sharpness out of the road disappearing from view among the trees lining the sides of a cross-road.

"That fellow looks as if he knew how to enjoy the good things of life," muttered Fox, as the carriage passed.

"Hello! What caused him to look at me in that way?"

His attention thus attracted, the detective stood looking after the carriage until it disappeared at the cross-road—as he supposed it to be.

But on walking to this point, Fox saw that what he had supposed was a cross-road was evidently a private one—there being the beginning of a new iron fence on either side of the entrance.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed as the idea flashed upon him. "This is Dawson's new property, and that was the gentleman himself!"

"Well, there's no harm done. I'd as soon have him see me in this face as any other," he continued, gazing curiously along the private road.



He had no particular object in coming there—and not the faintest idea of calling on Mr. Dawson, having spoken of doing so merely to worry Jessie into becoming more open with him.

After a few minutes, Fox turned back and took a survey of the Old Mill.

It was an ancient looking structure, dating back, probably, to the days of the Revolution. Unconsciously, Fox grew interested in the old building, and lighting a cigar walked around it, examining it from every point of view.

In this way the better part of an hour flew by unnoticed, and he was still gazing at the Old Mill when a harsh voice asked:

"Well, are you satisfied with it? If not, we'll alter it to suit you!"

Turning quickly, the detective found himself facing Dawson, who looked as if he had been "enjoying" himself still more during the past hour—and to a dangerous extent.

If Dawson expected to embarrass the Fox, he was sadly disappointed. Surprised the latter certainly was, but so pleased was he at the way the other was exposing his real character, that he forgave—or rather forgot—the rudeness, and good-naturedly replied: "If I were the owner, my last dollar would be spent to preserve the building as it is."

"Humph!" grunted Dawson. "Then I will not have it altered."

"That's as you please, sir," coolly returned Fox, as, turning on his heel, he walked toward the town.

Speechless with rage and astonishment that anybody in Brookvale should dare resent his rudeness—dispute his superiority—Dawson stood staring after Fox for fully a minute without moving or speaking.

At length awakening to life, Dawson uttered a savage oath, and hurried toward his house muttering:

"I'll make you repent that, you impudent, sneaking scoundrel!"

Then, as a fresh idea occurred to him, he continued:

"By the Eternal! Can this fellow be a detective? It looks like it, by Jove! This conversation with the bartender, followed by this sneaking down here, is decidedly suspicious."

"I'll watch that fellow from this moment! Lead the hound on—and then finish him!"

From this it will be seen that the Fox's conversation with the bartender was known to Dawson!

For the last couple days the strictly religious, highly-respectable gentleman had astonished everybody by his heavy drinking—which being ascribed to grief over the loss of his friend and relative, Jack Harney, was looked upon with an indulgent eye.

Dawson had, in fact, formed one of the drinking party that interrupted Fox's conversation with the barkeeper.

The latter, in the true spirit of his trade, having talked of Dawson to Fox, made things even by informing the former that the latter had been inquiring about him.

This might have been annoying, but why should the wealthy, and respected Mr. Dawson suspect the inquirer of being a detective—or care whether he was or not?

While Mr. Dawson was hurrying homeward, breathing vengeance on Fox, the latter was leisurely pursuing his course townward, congratulating himself on the insight he had so unexpectedly obtained into Dawson's true character.

"Why, the fellow talks like a blackguard, and steals upon one like an assassin!" thought the detective.

He was planning a course of action with regard to Dawson, and had just concluded with the above, when the noise of the latter's furiously driven carriage caused him to look behind, and, then, to step aside in time to escape a cloud of dust.

A spiteful grin greeted this move on Fox's part.

"He's certainly showing himself in his true colors to-day," commented the detective.

Then recollecting the character ascribed to Dawson by Thorpe—who certainly had no reason to like him—the Fox wondered if he was not, himself, making a mistake.

"Perhaps it is Harney's death, and the liquor drinking caused by it, which has made the change in him," muttered Fox, doubtfully.

As the sequel will show, this was partly right, and partly wrong—but not in the sense meant by the detective.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE MAN OF MANY FACES.

ON arriving at the hotel, Fox found Dawson braced against the bar, ordering drinks and talking loudly.

The half-dozen men composing the drinking party—excluding the barkeeper—were of a decidedly hard, not to say desperate, character.

How these men came to be acquainted with a man of Dawson's standing was a mystery to everybody, but for the past few days they had been with him almost constantly.

Apparently Dawson had not noticed Fox's entrance and the latter was about to go on to his room when he heard the former saying:

"It's a pity we didn't hang that rascal! Now, we'll have lawyers to defend him, and detectives to fasten the crime on somebody else!"

Mr. Dawson was "leading him on."

On hearing the foregoing loudly expressed sentiment, Fox paused for a moment, and then turned toward the bar.

Not half so drunk as he pretended to be, Dawson saw the momentary pause, and became confirmed in his suspicion that the stranger was a detective.

Mr. Dawson was undoubtedly a very shrewd man—in his own opinion at all events—but he was dealing with no "farmer," and made the mistake of ceasing to talk the moment he had accomplished his purpose.

Fox had hardly reached the bar before he realized that Dawson suspected him of being a detective, and immediately became the famous Man of Many Faces.

Standing with one side to the bar, and his back to the Dawson party for a half minute, Fox raised his handkerchief to his face just as the barkeeper approached for his order.

When defending Thorpe, the Fox was a man of about forty-five, wearing an iron-gray beard. When engaging board at the hotel, he was a rather plain-looking young man of thirty, or thereabouts—beardless but for a tuft of hair on his chin. Now, he was a rather handsome young fellow of twenty-three or twenty-four, wearing a single eye-glass, (perhaps to make up for lack of beard,) and a most decidedly "English you know" air.

With Fox, who, (aside from his power the facial muscles,) was a born actor, the changing of the appearance of his face was a matter of but a few moments. Clothing, and such accessories, gave the only clue to his identity.

In this instance, no one present, except Dawson, had seen the detective in his fashionable garb, and when, after removing his handkerchief from his face, the Fox ordered "a bottle of bass!" there were two very surprised men in the hotel bar.

Mr. Harvey Dawson had had only a side glance at Fox, but could have sworn a minute previous that the man of the Old Mill was present. Now, he would not venture to say whether there was any stranger at all present.

He had been drinking pretty heavily for two days, and was not certain of himself.

The barkeeper was not so badly upset by the stranger's general resemblance to "Mr. Fox," because he had not seen the latter in the clothing he was now wearing, but was surprised at finding he had been mistaken in the figure of his guest.

For a half-hour afterward, Mr. Dawson kept the barkeeper busy serving drinks, but drank very little himself.

At length, apparently tired of waiting, the host of the party called the barkeeper aside, and asked him if he knew the name of the man who had been inquiring about him (Dawson) that morning.

"Oh, yes! Fox is his name," was the prompt reply.

"Can you ascertain if he is in his room now—without letting him know your object, if he should be?"

"Certainly. Here, Pete. Take this ice-water up to 43, and say I beg his pardon for forgetting about it. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

Suspicious of the handsome young stranger still standing at the bar, against the rail of which he was leaning, while smoking a cigar, Mr. Dawson had determined to settle his doubts by ascertaining if Mr. Fox was in his room.

If the boy dispatched by the bartender reported Mr. Fox as being in his room, then the stranger needed no further attention. If not—

Mr. Dawson had not yet decided what course to pursue in the event of Fox's absence, but he would certainly not lose sight of the young man at the bar, until the latter's identity was definitely settled.

Watching Dawson and the bartender whispering, Fox surmised that he was the subject of conversation, but, of course had no idea of the plan to discover whether he had returned.

His very ignorance of what was going on was sufficient to render the Fox uneasy, and it was with a feeling of relief that he heard the ice-water order for 43, as the evident upshot of some request of Dawson's.

Within a few minutes the bearer of the ice-water returned with a message from the occupant of No. 43, saying that he had not asked for the water, but would take it—with thanks.

"So, you see, he's in, sir!" triumphantly exclaimed the barkeeper.

"Yes, so it seems," assented Dawson, and already beginning to feel less necessity for speaking guardedly, asked:

"Are you sure you sent to the right room?"

"Why, of course I am!"

"Then there can be no doubt but that this fellow, Fox, went up through the ladies' entrance," commented Dawson, adding:

"Come, let's have another bottle! I must go to my cousin's, and can stay no longer."

Fox, who had been almost paralyzed to hear the barkeeper positively assert that he (Fox) was the occupant of room No. 43. (although knowing the correct number to be 20) now became all attention, and observed Dawson whisper a few words to one of his companions—unnoticed by the others—while the wine was being opened.

Immediately after drinking his glass of wine Dawson departed, and a minute or two later the fellow to whom he had spoken followed.

"I must see what they are up to," decided the Fox, who had already determined to witness, (if at all possible,) the interview between Jessie Harney, and the man who claimed her as his cousin.

There were two entrances to the hotel bar, and passing through the one opposite that used by Dawson and his follower, the detective reached the street in time to see the latter.

"He's going to meet Dawson," muttered Fox, as he noted the hurried walk of the man, and immediately started in pursuit.



It was about three in the afternoon—the dead time of the day in a quiet country town—and upon reaching the corner the shadow could see quite some distance along the main street because of the few people moving about.

Right ahead, and moving rapidly, was the man to whom Dawson had spoken, while the latter could be seen fully a quarter mile away, driving at an unusually slow gait.

"There is something very wrong about this Dawson, and there is some mischief afoot, or he would not be meeting this cut-throat looking fellow before going to the Harneys," decided Fox, as he fell in behind Dawson's follower.

He was right. There was mischief afoot—mischief of a deadly nature, and he was the object of it.

## CHAPTER IX.

### DAWSON LEADS HIM ON.

THE telling of one lie usually necessitates the telling of many more, either to support it, or escape its consequences.

Having lied to Dawson at noon regarding Fox, in saying that the latter had been inquiring about him, the barkeeper feared the result of a meeting between the two men.

A collision, or an explanation, would be the inevitable result of a meeting, and not wishing to be the cause of the former, and anxious to avoid the latter, the barkeeper adopted the ruse shown in the previous chapter.

But notwithstanding the apparent proof he had received that Fox was in his room, Dawson had still remained a little suspicious of the youthful looking stranger, because of the sudden change in the latter's evident intention of leaving, immediately before he (Dawson) mentioned the attempted lynching.

If there was one detective in town, why not two? Mr. Dawson asked himself, and determined to test the character of the stranger by making the whispered appointment with one of his companions, knowing that it would be observed.

Just why a gentleman of Mr. Dawson's standing should be so suspicious of strangers will appear later, but he could not have pleased Fox better than by showing himself to be so.

"That man may not be the murderer, but there certainly is something on his mind," muttered the shadow, moving just fast enough to keep his men in sight.

Then he began to wonder how Dawson's suspicions had been excited, and what had induced the barkeeper to tell a deliberate lie.

He could make nothing at all of the latter, and finally set down the former as a case of "guilty conscience needs no accuser," for Fox was beginning to have a very strong suspicion that Mr. Dawson was not entirely ignorant of the cause of Jack Harney's death.

"But there's so much confounded mystery about every person and thing connected with the affair, and the case against Thorpe is so clear—on the surface, at all events—that it will be almost impossible to fix the murder on any one else.

"When it comes to the trial, however, I guess we won't find much trouble in making Thorpe save his neck by accounting for that missing hour. Then, too, that girl must be made to talk. She knows a lot, and a skillful cross-examiner will have little difficulty in bringing it out.

"Family reasons, probably, keep her silent now, but when a man's life is in danger, family secrets amount to nothing.

"Jessie was—and is yet—in love with Thorpe, but that is not why she is so positive

of his innocence—in the face of such damning proof that he is guilty.

"She knows something and must tell it! He can account for his whereabouts, and must do it in spite of himself!"

The detective paused for a moment—mentally and physically—brought to a standstill by an idea which had just occurred to him.

"Great Caesar! Can the two things be connected?" he muttered, resuming his walk with a glance at those ahead.

"It's certainly strange that she should show no surprise at his refusal to account for that hour, since it may decide his fate," continued Fox.

"All she said was 'make him tell'—as if—but no! Hang it all! I can't believe that he is withholding this explanation (which is of such vital importance) because making it would involve her good name in any way."

Thus musing, Fox pursued the new idea which had occurred to him until he perceived that Dawson was pulling up in front of the Old Mill, where he waited until joined by his follower, and then both entered.

"A good place for a private chat," commented the shadow, and determined that he, too, should take a part in it—necessarily a silent one—little dreaming that the whole affair was cut and dried, and that while engrossed in thinking out the Jessie Harney-Thorpe idea, both Dawson and Murray, (the follower,) had detected him.

There was one window on the side of the mill facing Fox as he approached. The window-sill would be about level with a tall man's head, so that the detective—(being of a little less than medium height,) stood erect under it in perfect security.

For a few minutes after taking his position under the window, Fox heard nothing, and, fearing Dawson and his companion were in some other part of the building, he was about to risk a look through the window when Dawson's voice reached him.

"Well, Murray," he was saying, "there's the letter. Deliver it to my cousin, and wait for her answer. Then stop at the hotel and ascertain if that fellow, Fox, is still in his room."

"Yes, sir. Anything else?"

"No; that's all.

"I'm worried about that fellow, Murray! I suspect he's a detective, and, if he is, he'll make trouble here, for he'll begin finding all sorts of clues that may end by playing some innocent man in danger, and cast doubt upon the evidence of guilt upon the real criminal."

"Who sent for him, anyhow?"

"I don't know. I wish I did!"

"Why not see him and buy him off? Explain your relationship to the family, and that you don't want the cause of justice interfered with."

"That's a good idea, Murray! I'll call on him first thing to-morrow morning.

"You go ahead, now, and get back as soon as you can. Take my team—I'll wait here until you come back."

"That won't be before eight or nine o'clock, Mr. Dawson—I've got some important business of my own to attend to."

"Well, do the best you can."

"I will, sir."

The noise of a seat—"a box," thought Fox—warned the listener, that the messenger was about starting, and he hurried to the rear of the mill, where he concealed himself until Murray drove away.

Strange doubts now filled Fox's mind, and as he thought of the queer conduct and reticence of Jessie and Thorpe, the detective began to believe he was on the wrong scent.

"It will only be two or three hours at the longest," he muttered, and determined to await the return of the messenger.

As Dawson had announced his intention of awaiting Murray's return, Fox paid no further attention to that gentleman, and

stretching himself on the grass began pondering the various points of the most mysterious case ever he had undertaken.

Dawson's suspicious actions regarding himself (Fox) were now explained, (?) and there was nothing left but the scrap of paper as a basis for suspecting that he was in any way concerned in the murder.

Who, then, but the man charged with it, could have committed the brutal crime?

Robbery, evidently, was not the murderer's object, and, as far as was known, Jack Harney had not had an enemy in the world—except, perhaps, Frank Thorpe.

But the Fox would not accept the Thorpe theory—yet. He had set out to free the accused—not to hang him—and for three hours lay puzzling his brain over all sorts of theories, endeavoring to find one which would fit the case.

He might have been much more profitably engaged at his post listening under the window, and still more profitably in glancing through it, occasionally.

At the expiration of three hours, the patiently-waiting Fox heard a carriage approaching, and arose from the grass muttering:

"It's the messenger. I'll hear his report—then go home and await Mr. Dawson's call."

He was right regarding the messenger, but wrong—sadly wrong as to the rest.

## CHAPTER X.

### TRAPPED.

As the carriage stopped a little above the mill, there was no danger of the driver seeing a person at the side window, so Fox immediately resumed his position there.

He had not long to wait. In less than a minute the door was thrown open and a man entered, saying:

"Here, Mr. Dawson?"

It was pitch dark in the room, which accounted for the question.

"Yes, yes!" came the rather impatient response from near the window.

"Well, sir, I saw Miss Harney, and she gave me a letter—"

"Come into the other room!" interrupted Dawson, adding:

"There's no light here to read by. Besides, I want to have a talk with you."

Fox heard them enter an adjoining room, and close the door. He knew that the door would not, probably, prevent him from hearing what was going on, and quickly decided that that "long talk" was of sufficient importance to warrant his entering the mill.

By the window? No, he might strike against something on the other side. The door was unlocked—that would be the easier and safer way.

So, hurrying around to the front, Fox cautiously pushed in the heavy door, closed it very softly, and—received a blow on the head that would have felled an ox!

For some time after consciousness returned, the detective was unable to recollect what had happened—or rather what had preceded the stinging pain now in his head—or to make out his surroundings.

Gradually it all came back to him—all that had taken place up to the closing of the heavy front door of the Old Mill. After that all was blank.

Gradually, too, as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, Fox saw that he was in a large room evidently underground from the solidity of the flooring, and the fact that there were no windows or openings of any kind discernible.

As his hands and feet were bound, and a rope around his waist held him fast to the chair in which he found himself seated, Fox quickly perceived that he was a prisoner, but made so by whom he was not at all certain.



He had heard Dawson and Murray enter the rear room. Of that Fox was absolutely certain and he was fully as certain that they could not have reached the front door in time to have dealt him the blow which thumped in his head told him he had been struck.

"No, they had nothing to do with it," he decided, and if freed the next minute, and in position to do so, would have hesitated about accusing Mr. Dawson even of being aware of what had occurred in the Old Mill.

"I wonder if this is the Old Mill?" he muttered. "And what am I reserved for? There must be some powerful motive for this, and an equally strong reason for sparing my life.

"It was a mistake, however, for if I escape every man concerned will suffer if it takes my whole lifetime to hunt them down!

Already the Fox was becoming his old confident self, and meditating vengeance.

He had no idea of time, but hoped that some of his captors would put in appearance before the thirst he was already beginning to feel became insupportable, as it soon would.

"I'll lose my head and begin telling tales out of school if he or some one don't come pretty soon," he muttered, after an hour's painful waiting.

But, no one came, and as time passed his sufferings increased. His throat seemed to be afire—his head about to split open.

"Surely they haven't left me here to die!" he groaned, and then already half delirious, yelled:

"Dogs! Devils! Fiends! Where are ye? Water, fiends, water!"

The last word was a perfect shriek of agony, and as it died away the tortured man heard footsteps overhead.

A minute later a man carrying a lantern, accompanied by another carrying what looked like a large dishpan, appeared at the other end of the cellar—as Fox's prison proved to be.

The unfortunate detective greeted the newcomers with a joyful cry, and then his head fell back in a dead faint.

"What does this mean?" demanded the smaller of the two men with a fierce oath.

"Wha—what?" stammered the other.

"You know, curse you! Give him some whisky and water—quick!"

The order was promptly obeyed, and, as Fox began to show signs of returning consciousness, the smaller man continued:

"If this happens again, you'd better dust before I find it out! For, just as sure as your name is Butts, I'll stick a knife in ye!"

The man designated as Butts fairly shook at this fiercely uttered threat, but made no response—was apparently incapable of making any—and eagerly obeyed the next order:

"Get out o' here for the next ten minutes! But see that you stay within call, or I'll break every bone in your lazy, drunken, body!"

As Butts hurried away, the other man unbound Fox's hands, and a moment later the latter opened his eyes and groaned.

"Here, try some of this," said the smaller man in a not unkindly tone, and placed a small glass of the same mixture as before to Fox's lips.

The eagerly swallowed drink revived the detective, who with a faint "thank you" looked at his attendant.

The latter was bending over the big pan, which contained various kinds of food and drink, and did not observe the look, but probably would not have heeded it if he had, for he wore a black mask.

"Here's a little something to eat," he said, placing a plate containing some meat cut in small bits, and vegetables and buttered bread on a chair in front of Fox.

The food was almost as acceptable as the drink had been, and the masked man growled out a savage oath as he observed the half-starved way in which it was devoured.

"Don't think we're a lot o' savages," he said. "A drunken hound, who kept reporting you unconscious, is responsible for the failure to provide you with food—curse him!"

"Kill you we might have—and may yet—but I'll guarantee there'll be no torturing done while I'm on deck!"

"Take your time and eat all you can for you'll need it in a little while—and it may be your last!"

## CHAPTER XI.

### AS A PRISONER.

THERE was no attempt at bluster—nothing of the fierceness that seemed natural to him—in the last ominous words uttered by the masked man.

Quietly, almost sadly, the threatening words were spoken, and the very difference between their tone and that of those which preceded gave them a more deadly significance.

But as he continued to eat and drink, Fox was recovering his nerve, and pretending to misunderstand the other replied:

"Well, you may be sure I'm not anxious to wait for another meal here."

"It won't do—you understand what I mean," quietly returned the little man, adding:

"I see you are through, and, unless you have something to say to me, I will leave you for an hour."

"I have something to say!" exclaimed Fox. "First, I should like to know where I am, and why, and how long it is proposed to keep me here?"

"Don't you know all that without having me say a single word on the subject?"

The masked man looked keenly at Fox while speaking, but the Man of Many Faces was the last one likely to betray himself by his face, and he looked even more honest than he felt when answering:

"If, as you intimate, I was possessed of the information I have asked for, I would not bother you or myself by asking questions."

He was looking squarely in the eyes of the mask while speaking, and his words seemed to impress the listener favorably.

"There is one point upon which I might hazard a guess," added Fox, "and that is, that I am in the cellar of the building known as the Old Mill."

The masked man nodded, and after a few moments asked:

"And you cannot even make a guess at the rest—the other information?"

"I haven't the most remote idea of why or how I came here, nor, of course, when I shall be at liberty to leave."

A short, dry laugh greeted this speech. Then, after a long and earnest look at Fox, the masked man said:

"You are correct as to being in the cellar of the Old Mill, and, although I cannot understand your ignorance, I will inform you on the other points."

"First, you are here because you were caught spying around the place, and as to how long you will be kept here, depends entirely on the decision of those who will try your case within two hours."

"More than that I cannot tell you for the simple reason that I know no more."

"Thank you," was the quiet response of the Fox, and as the other was about to leave added:

"I don't know by what right—what authority—you hold me here, but even if by right of might, there should be something more than mere guesswork about it."

"Guesswork?" echoed the masked man.

"Yes—what else can it be? I know nothing about you, or your friends. My first visit to the Old Mill was one of sheer curiosity. This is my second visit—also prompted by curiosity."

"Does your curiosity lead you to enter other people's houses like a sneak-thief?" asked the masked man, sharply.

"If particularly excited, yes; but what has that to do with you? I saw a man enter the Old Mill, and, hearing him call to another within, wondered what could be going on in the deserted building."

"Determined to know what it all meant, I attempted to follow the man—and that's all I can remember."

"But, again, what has my entering the Old Mill to do with you?"

"You'll find out soon enough," was the grim response, and catching sight of Butts who had returned and was standing in the background, patiently awaiting attention, the speaker continued:

"It's scarcely worth while tying your hands again, so I'll leave you in charge of this fellow. Even if you were unbound, escape would be impossible, and the attempt would simply seal your fate."

"Here, Butts! This man's hands are free. Leave them so, in order that he may help himself to anything he may fancy in that pan. If he wants anything else—no matter what—you see that it is got—d'ye hear?"

"Ye es, sir," quavered Butts, "I'll—"

But with a nod to the prisoner, the smaller man was gone.

"What kind of a game have I run against, now?" wondered Fox, as he surveyed the still shivering wretch standing guard over him.

Then, as the idea occurred to him, the prisoner remarked:

"I think a little more of that whisky and water would do me good."

The hint was taken without a moment's delay, and by the dim light of the lantern, Fox saw that the liquor was poured from a quart bottle still nearly full.

He now knew how much "ammunition" he had to work with, (which was his object in asking for the liquor,) and taking the glass from Butts said:

"Try a little yourself. I guess you don't mind drinking from the bottle, eh?"

No, Butts didn't mind—in fact it was just what he wanted, for the quantity he swallowed would not be so easily noticed.

"That tastes pretty good," commented Fox, as he handed back the glass.

"Yes—fine!" agreed Butts.

"Suppose we have a little more?" suggested Fox, and to allay the suspicion which he saw gathering in his guard's face, added:

"I want to see how it tastes pure—without water."

"Oh, I see! Here, pour it yourself."

Taking the bottle and glass which Butts handed him, the prisoner carefully refrained from pouring out even a drop of the precious liquid—precious because through its influence he hoped to regain his liberty, or at all events freedom to make a fight for his life.

"There—that's enough. I won't want any more, so, you can take the balance," he said, as handing back the bottle he placed the empty glass to his lips.

Butts looked somewhat suspicious—not because of the empty glass, for he could not see that, but because of the generosity of the invitation, and withstood the temptation until Fox, removing the glass from his lips, sighed:

"Ah! By Jove, that is fine!"

Then Butts gave up the struggle, and placing the bottle to his mouth, swallowed fully half of what remained.

"It's great!" he gasped, turning to the prisoner, but the latter was already beginning to sink into a stupor from the effects of the last drink, and made no reply.

"All the better for me," muttered the guard on perceiving the condition of his prisoner.

"He said t' give this chap whatever was



wanted, so I'll swear he drank it all himself. Nobody'll know the difference—this chap'll be dead by that time!

"Here's luck, Butts!"

And placing the bottle once more to his mouth, the faithful guard nearly finished it. Then looking with maudlin gravity at Fox, muttered:

"He's safe 'nough—dead 'n 'n hour, anyhow. Guess 'll take a snooze."

Suiting the action to the word, Mr. Butts stretched himself at the prisoner's feet, and a few minutes after his loud snoring proclaimed the fact that he had found no trouble in falling asleep.

Then the prisoner awoke from his stupor, and removed the cords around his feet—he had already removed the rope from his body—and, then, proceeded to examine Mr. Butts's pockets!

"Not bad!" muttered Fox, and picking up the lantern, started for the other end of the cellar.

## CHAPTER XII.

### A DARING IDEA.

ON reaching the extreme end of the cellar—from which point Butts and his companion had appeared, Fox found a ladder standing straight up and down, as if fastened above.

Hanging the lantern on his arm, the detective cautiously mounted the ladder until when nearing the top, the voices of several men talking loudly, and at times angrily, reached him, and he paused to listen.

"I tell ye, Murray, this is all nonsense! If he's to be put out o' the way, what's the matter with findin' out all he knows before we do it?" was the first Fox heard.

"Nothing, if he's willing to tell it," replied Murray, whose voice the listener recognized as that of the fierce little companion of Butts; "but, I've said there'll be no torturing—no Indian business—and you can just bet I'll see that there won't! Threaten him all you've a mind to, but no man lays a finger, except the final one, on him while I'm able to raise my arm!"

Murray was master, evidently, for there was nothing further said on that point, the next question being:

"What about the trial, Cap?"

"We'll give him another hour, before we go down," replied Murray.

"The thing's a bloody farce! What's the use o' botherin' with a trial?" growled the voice of the ruffian who wished the prisoner tortured for information.

"Look here, Nosey! Who's running this game—you or me?" came the voice of Murray, in its fiercest tones.

"You are, I suppose," was the sullen response.

"You suppose! Why, you big-nosed idiot, don't you know? If you don't, I'll spend a half-minute telling you some of these days!"

Silence reigned for two or three minutes after this significant threat, and then the voice of the captain was heard again.

"The trial will not be a farce, boys," he said, "for I'm not half satisfied that this man was looking us up at all—if he is a detective."

"Why the information comes right from headquarters—from the boss himself!" exclaimed a third voice in a surprised tone.

"Sure. But did ye never hear of men getting other people to grind their axes while they did the bossing?" was the significant response of the captain.

"He's going to get a square deal, and I'll stand by him until there's more proof that he was after us."

"Why we've got proof enough that he's a detective?" interjected Nosey.

"Suppose he is? I don't believe he's after us, or knows anything of our business, and he isn't going to be slaughtered just because he is a detective—not while I'm on deck!"

"Well, the boss swears to it—and we've got to put him out of the way."

"Not much! If the boss wants him out of the way, let him tell the real reason for doing it. We're not hired murderers!"

"That's so!" assented the third man, adding:

"We're here t' make money—not stiff! But if this cove has got on to our game, then he must be silenced at all hazards."

"I don't think he knows anything about it, and that's why I'm going to give him a trial," said Murray.

"I don't want any cold blood on my hands," he added, "and you must act as square as you know how. If he's not onto us, I can't see any reason for killing him."

It was a cool, business-like way of putting it—this discussion over a man's life, and the listener shuddered as he realized that unless he escaped within the hour nothing could save him.

"For, knowing me to be a detective, they will certainly decide to save themselves by silencing me," reasoned Fox.

"I wonder what game they are up to—and who is the boss?"

"Making money, eh? That sounds like counterfeiting, though there hasn't been any complaints from this section."

"I've got nothing to do with that, however; my business, now, is to get out."

Thus Fox, as he cautiously descended the ladder, and sought an opening through which he might escape.

The search proved fruitless. There was no window or opening of any kind, and from the length of the ladder Fox judged that he must be at least fifteen feet under the surface.

"Digging out in less than an hour is simply hopeless," he muttered, pausing in front of Butts who was sleeping soundly.

As he stood looking at the sleeper, an idea—and it was a daring one—occurred to the detective.

Placing the lantern on the chair he had lately occupied, Fox drew the big double-edged knife, and giving Butts a shake ordered him to "get up!"

The ruffian responded by rolling into a more comfortable position, preparatory to resuming his nap, but the Fox had no time to waste, and emphasized a second order with a kick.

This roused Butts to a realization of the state of affairs, and he stared at Fox, who standing over him with the murderous knife, repeated the order to "get up!"

Butts obeyed, and the detective continued:

"Now, take off your coat and sit down in that chair. I don't want to hurt you, but unless you do just as I say, you'll never see daylight again."

An arrant coward, Butts tremblingly obeyed Fox's orders, and having fastened the ruffian as he had been himself fastened, the detective put on his captive's hat and coat.

"There's only one thing more," he muttered, and taking his handkerchief he proceeded to gag Butts.

The latter's face was commonplace, beardless and dirty, and his figure but slightly larger than that of the detective, who had determined to attempt to personate him.

"It's my only chance," he decided, as having placed the lantern on the ground beside Butts, he rubbed some earth on his face, pulled the hat well over his eyes, and walked to the foot of the ladder to await his judges.

"Now, for it!" he muttered, when a half-hour later he heard the party above moving about, while one of them was tugging at the trap-door.

Perfectly sure of the result of discovery, or of the trial if he awaited it, Fox drew his revolver and stepped out of the light admitted to the cellar as the trap-door was thrown open.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### A RACE FOR LIFE.

"If they come all together, I'll stand a fair chance of getting up before they discover who is in the chair. If not, my game will be blocked, and I'll have to fight for it!"

So decided Fox while waiting in the semi-darkness for the counterfeiters—for counterfeiting was what was meant by "making money," as the detective had rightly guessed.

The first of the gang (now numbering a half-dozen) to descend was Murray, closely followed by the others.

"Hello! What are you doing here? Why ain't you looking after that man?"

As Murray made this demand, the last of the gang was descending and Fox was advancing toward the ladder, though keeping out of the light as much as possible.

Bringing his wonderful powers of mimicry into play, the Man of Many Faces replied:

"Goin' for oil for the lantern 'n' water for the man. His hands are tied, so he's all safe."

The voice, the general appearance of the speaker, and more than all his cringing manner—all were those of Butts, and without the least suspicion of the truth, Murray ordered him to "hurry up!" and to the others explained:

"We'll want light, and plenty of it, to form any sort of a fair opinion of this fellow—though I don't suppose it will make any difference with you fellows. You've taken the boss's word for it, and that settles the poor devil in the chair."

This talk served to delay all the members of the gang save one. This man had started toward the detective immediately after descending the ladder, and, just as Fox reached the floor above, he heard a yell from below.

"They've discovered the trick!" he exclaimed, and even as he spoke there was a rush for the ladder, but it came too late.

Springing up the remaining step or two, Fox with a mighty effort closed the trap, and made a rush for the door.

Several shots were fired, but in the hurry and confusion Fox escaped injury, and, through the delay caused by the closed trap door, was well on the road to the town when the counterfeiters got out in a pursuit which was quickly seen would be hopeless.

They were desperate fellows, and Fox's escape meant a great deal to them. The gang would be scattered and their business broken up—that was the very cheapest they could expect to get off at, for as the captain had said, all firmly believed that Fox was after them.

For this reason, the chase was continued long after it was evident that the detective would certainly escape, and shot after shot was fired in the hope of wounding him.

It was in the early morning, houses were scarce along the road, and it was not until Fox was actually on the outskirts of the town that the chase was abandoned.

"Now we've got to make ready to dust!" exclaimed Murray as they started back for the Old Mill.

"Yes, he'll be back with the police and specials—curse him—almost as soon as we will," agreed another, adding:

"Wouldn't it be a good idea to put one man on watch, while the rest of us bury the plates and dies? We might have time."

"We'll try it, but I'm afraid that fellow will be right back with a posse," replied Murray with a fierce oath.

"So, too, thought the others, but they were all wrong. An hour passed, and the plates and dies were hidden, but the lookout reported nothing of the expected police, and when another and still another hour had passed Murray said:



"Hang me, if I know what to make of it! It looks as if we were going to have no trouble after all, for, if he is a Government bloodhound he knows that the only chance of getting evidence would be in coming back at once."

"That's so," agreed Nosey, "but what'n thunder's keepin' him back?"

"Maybe he was hit, but it did not take effect right away," suggested another.

"That's most likely, but I'm willing to risk it, and go find out for sure," declared Murray.

"It'll be risky work, if he's able to put the police onto us," remarked one of the gang, adding:

"But he hasn't seen our faces, I guess, so it's not so dangerous to the men as it is to the business—it looks as if that was cooked."

There was no response to this, and shortly afterward the captain started for town (much less confident of safety than he allowed the others to know,) for he had not forgotten that the detective must have remembered how, and by whom, he was led into the Old Mill trap.

"There's only one way to be sure of it, and that's to go right there myself," muttered Murray, and straight to the hotel he went.

Entering the bar, the first man the counterfeiter saw was Fox. Not the Fox who had escaped that morning, but the man of whom Dawson first became suspicious.

The Fox was smoking a cigar, looking as cool as a cucumber, and certainly not at all like a man who had that morning made a desperate race for his life, nor was there the least sign of his having been wounded.

Murray paused at the entrance, but Fox never even glanced at him, continuing his apparently careless conversation with the barkeeper, and as if unaware of the counterfeiter's presence.

The latter was sorely puzzled by the detective's actions—or rather inaction—as well as his appearance, which resembled that of the escaped man enough to be perplexing, to say the least.

Taking the bull by the horns, Murray advanced to the bar and called for a drink, thus breaking off the conversation, and with a careless nod Fox left, saying he was going up-stairs for a few minutes.

This was Murray's opportunity, and he seized it by asking:

"How long has that man been in here?"

"Pretty near all the time since he came down to breakfast," replied the barkeeper.

"Sure he 'came down' at all?"

"Certainly! I sent up a boy to call him at half past seven. He asked me to do so yesterday, and I came pretty near forgetting it."

"And he was awake, I suppose?"

"Not much. It took two or three minutes pounding before the boy got any answer at all, and then he only swore at being disturbed—so the boy reported—and as he was very anxious about being called I went up myself. He got up after a few minutes, saying he had slept very little, and asked me to send up a drink while he dressed."

"Then we're all at sea about this fellow," muttered Murray, adding:

"I'll have to report this business to the boss. I wonder what his object was in wanting the other young fellow put out of the way. I don't believe he was a detective at all!"

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### GOING INTO BUSINESS.

As the perplexed counterfeiter was leaving the saloon, Fox returned, but passed through and out of the main entrance without attracting attention.

He did not care about the counterfeiter, was not certain in fact that they were counterfeiter, but was curious to know who the mysterious "boss" was, and what

connection existed between Dawson and these men who had made such desperate efforts to recapture him.

Feeling pretty certain of being looked up, Fox, even while running, was planning to puzzle the counterfeiter.

Following Murray with every sense on the alert, Fox saw that the counterfeiter was not going to return to the Old Mill—was, in fact, pursuing a directly opposite course.

Whether it was the puzzling appearance of Fox, or the coming interview with the "boss" that worried him, Murray walked slowly and with down bent head, never looking back until Dawson's original place of residence was reached.

"Whose house is that?" the detective asked of a passing teamster.

"Mr. Dawson's," was the reply.

"Dawson's! Then, by the Lord Harry, I was right about him at the start! That fellow, Murray, is certainly going to report to the 'boss,' and if Dawson's the man, I need look no further for the murderer of Jack Harney!"

"If he fears me enough to lie to these men about my business here, in order to have me murdered, he must have some powerful motive for it—and what more powerful than the hiding of his crime?"

"Now, I must find the motive for the crime. If that girl would only talk!"

Thus soliloquizing, the Fox wheeled round and walked back as far as the Harney residence, where he stopped, thinking he might be able to induce Jessie to talk, but to his surprise found her engaged with a lawyer from New York—a Mr. Bullerton.

Mr. Bullerton was a shrewd man, and a famous one in his profession, but like Fox was puzzled by Jessie's conduct—her reticence regarding Dawson, and anxiety about Thorpe—and he plainly informed her that unless the latter was more frank with him than she was, he would not undertake the defense.

Fox, (who was present during the greater part of the interview,) left with the lawyer, but parted with him at the gate after making an appointment for a meeting that evening.

"I'll hear the result of your interview with Thorpe, and may then have something to tell you; but we must not be seen together, for I am suspected already," said Fox as they parted—he to return to his hotel, while the lawyer started for the county jail.

At the hotel Fox lounged around the office and bar awaiting the appearance of Murray, and possibly Dawson, feeling certain that the report of the former would be a further investigation by one or both.

At the expiration of an hour, the expectations of the patiently-waiting detective were realized. Dawson and Murray entering the bar by different doors, and a few minutes apart.

Fox was talking with the barkeeper, allowing the latter to infer from his conversation that he was intending to open a clothing store in Brookvale, if he could find a suitable location.

Paying no attention to the new-comers, apparently, Fox continued the conversation until the barkeeper was called away to attend them, and then sauntered out, satisfied that what he had been saying would be quickly communicated to Dawson and Murray.

"By Jove, I must be careful, or that fellow will jump the town before I'm ready for him. He's looking desperately worried," muttered the Fox as he wandered aimlessly through the town, stopping now and then to look at a store, and incidentally to ascertain whether he was being shadowed.

He was about half-way through the town, when on stopping before an empty store, the keen-eyed detective caught sight of Mur-

ray. "Good! Now, they'll be satisfied about

the clothing-store yarn, and that hypocrite will sleep easier for a few days. I'll clinch the business right here, by hiring this place."

Going into the adjoining store (to which the "To Let" sign referred him), Fox promptly paid a deposit on the rental of the store, and then sauntered back to the hotel in the same careless fashion as he had left it.

"I shall want some alterations made, and will give you a memorandum of them tomorrow," the prospective tenant informed the landlord, and five minutes later, Murray was listening to this confirmation of the barkeeper's statement that Fox was a clothing merchant.

Shortly after the detective had returned to the hotel Murray made his appearance, and signed to Dawson, who was awaiting his return, to follow him into the office.

Five minutes after, the confederates returned to the bar—Dawson especially looking immensely relieved, for full of confidence in Fox's harmlessness, himself, Murray had managed to imbue his "boss" with a great deal of that feeling.

They approached the bar close to where Fox was standing, and having ordered a box of wine, Dawson carelessly remarked that there was enough to go round, adding:

"Perhaps this gentleman will join us?"

"This gentleman" accepted the invitation, carelessly enough saying:

"Thank you—don't mind if I do. It's rather lonesome work—drinking alone."

There was nothing in Fox's tone, or manner, to indicate the satisfaction he felt at thus forming the acquaintance of the man whom he now was morally certain had been concerned in the murder of Jack Harney.

Chatting over the wine, the three men spent an hour in discussing various topics, and then the wily Fox incidentally mentioned his purpose in coming to Brookvale, adding:

"It's curious, too, that near as it is to New York, I'd never have thought of Brookvale but for a murder that was committed here."

Dawson remained silent while Murray asked:

"New Yorker, eh?"

"Yes, but I've got sick of all the rush of city life, and propose to take it easier for the future. I've made enough already to get a fair business under way—even if I do nothing for the first six months."

This explanation seemed to remove the last vestige of suspicion from Dawson's mind, and he smilingly replied:

"Oh, there's no fear of your not doing business. A New York tailor is certain of liberal patronage, and I guess my friend and I can promise you the first orders."

"New York?" echoed Fox, laughing heartily.

Dawson and Murray started in astonishment, and Fox, still laughing, explained:

"Why, gentlemen, I know as much of tailoring as the pig does of preaching!"

This statement, of course, only increased the astonishment of the listeners, and Murray asked:

"Then why in thunder are ye goin' into the business, and how d'ye expect to run it?"

"I'm going into it just because it struck me as a nice, quiet, unsuspecting business; and as for running it—I don't intend to make such a fool of myself. I can easily hire a man to run it for me."

"Yes, but will that pay?"

"Pay? Between you and I, gentlemen, I don't care two straws whether it does or not! I must be engaged in some business for the next twelve months, or the police might—"

A born actor, and possessed of the wonderful command of his facial muscles already mentioned, when Fox stopped short at this point, he looked the picture of confusion.

Dawson and Murray exchanged significant glances, while Fox mumbled something un-



elligible, and to which the others paid no attention.

"Guess I'll go up-stairs," said Fox after a few moments' silence.

He moved toward the door as he spoke, but was stopped by Murray, who, at a look from Dawson, called:

"Hold on a minute, Mr. Fox! I want to have a few words with you. Let's have some more wine, bartender!"

"Now, I wonder, what's in the wind?" thought Fox, as he turned back.

## CHAPTER XV.

### MURRAY MAKES A PROPOSITION.

MURRAY seemed a little embarrassed when in response to the call, Fox promptly turned back and faced the others with a questioning look on his face.

"Let's go somewhere else—where we can talk privately," continued the captain, looking at Dawson for instructions.

The "boss" nodded approvingly, but did not stir when Fox started toward the door, saying:

"All right! Anywhere you please."

Murray again looked at Dawson, but as the latter made no sign, started after Fox, looking somewhat put out.

"Saving himself at my expense!" he muttered discontentedly, as he joined the detective.

The latter, too, felt rather put out over Dawson's failure to accompany them, but of course refrained from showing it.

Just where to take Fox, Murray hardly knew. It seemed rather too risky to bring a stranger to the Old Mill, yet that was the only absolutely safe place where they could talk, and they started in that direction, the captain deciding to judge from his companion's talk, whether it would be safe to admit the latter to the mill, and the secrets connected with it.

Accordingly, Murray took an early opportunity to half-jestingly ask:

"From what you said a few minutes ago, I should judge that you wouldn't worry yourself to death if all the police in the country were to drop dead suddenly, eh, Mr. Fox?"

"Why do you ask that?" was the response, accompanied by a very suspicious look.

Fox was in fact just a little suspicious, because of the direction in which they were walking, and of Dawson's failure to accompany them, but he had not the slightest idea of turning back, and the very suspicious look bestowed upon Murray was nearly all assumed.

The counterfeiter laughed, but returned to the question, asking:

"Am I not right about the police?"

"Suppose you are—what of it?" sharply demanded Fox.

The very sharpness of the question made it all the more pleasing to the counterfeiter captain, and caused him to speak more openly than he would otherwise have done.

"Well, it's just this way, Mr. Fox: If I'm correct in my estimate of you, we can do business that will be to our mutual advantage."

Fox made no response for several minutes. Apparently he was weighing Murray's words, and debating whether he should trust the latter, and this pleased the counterfeiter immensely.

"This Fox will be a reliable fellow to use for putting the stuff in circulation. He doesn't give his confidence to every Tom, Dick and Harry, but when he does, he'll be in it heart and soul."

Thus thought Murray as he awaited the decision of his companion, who presently exclaimed:

"I may be a fool for saying so, but I've decided to trust you, and will admit that

you are right! I have no love for the police."

The truth. Farrel the Fox really despised the average policeman.

"Good enough!" cried the counterfeiter, well pleased at having practically secured a sorely-needed assistant in "shoving the queer."

"Now, I'm going to return your confidence by making a proposition, which I never dreamed of even hinting to an ordinary stranger."

Murray paused to note the effect of his words, but Fox's face was expressionless, and he slowly continued:

"You are about to open a clothing-store, and I believe can easily do a large business, or if we can arrange matters as I hope and expect to, you can undersell anybody in town."

"Doing a big business you will necessarily change a great deal of money. Now, I know where bank-bills of every denomination, as well as gold and silver coin, are being made so skillfully that even the experts get fooled on them."

Again the counterfeiter paused, and again failing to gain any information from Fox's face, asked:

"Now, how would you like a share in that kind of business?"

Fox made no immediate response, but as if thinking aloud, said:

"As a merchant—a storekeeper—I would practically run no risk in handling some of this stuff—a little at a time, until I had tested its quality. Then, if O. K., I could sail right in."

"Right you are!" ejaculated Murray, delighted as much over his companion's caution, as his evident intention of joining the gang.

"Yes, I'll go into it if the stuff's any good," slowly decided Fox, briskly adding:

"Let me see some of it as soon as you can, for if it looks anyway good I'll take a building instead of a store."

"That's the way to talk!" exclaimed the delighted counterfeiter, adding:

"You can go right into manufacturing. Establish branches South and West, put 'safe' men in charge of them, and we can flood the whole blessed country before creating any suspicion."

"When can I see some of this stuff?"

"Now—or hold on! Let's go back to the hotel and I'll arrange either to bring you to where it is made, or bring you some samples, to-night."

"Look here! I want no half-confidences in this business. I'm either in it neck and crop, or not at all!"

Fox spoke sharply—almost angrily—and fearing he might yet lose so desirable a man Murray replied:

"Well, what d'ye want?"

"I want to know who I am dealing with—the heads of the affair! I'm going to risk a good deal of my own good cash in this thing—if it goes through—as well as my liberty, and I'm going to know who's who before doing it!"

"So you shall," assured the counterfeiter.

"But as for putting up any amount of dust, that's all nonsense," he added.

"Why?"

"Because the man we were drinking with will attend to that. He provides all the funds necessary for the proper carrying out of the work, and in consideration of that, escapes taking any active part in it."

"Who runs things?"

"I do, but subject to his orders."

"Then it's likely you're going back to consult with him about me?"

"You've hit it!"

"All right! Now, just listen: I don't care two straws one way or the other, so don't you press him on my account, and if I'm going into this at all it must be at once, for otherwise I'm to have some plans for al-

terations in the store I've engaged, ready for the owner to-morrow."

"Don't you bother about any plans. It will be all settled within an hour," assured Murray.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### TWO SHARPS.

For some time after Murray assured Fox that there would be no difficulty about the latter's becoming one of the gang of counterfeiter, both men walked on in silence.

As they drew near Brookvale, Fox, in a careless way, asked:

"Who is this man who provides funds rather than risk his skin?"

"One for whom I have little liking," unguardedly answered Murray, quickly adding:

"As you know, his name is Dawson, and he is supposed to be very wealthy by inheritance. He is wealthy, but has become so by backing all sorts of illegal enterprises—principally counterfeiting—and using men like you and me as cat's-paws."

"Why allow him to use you?"

"He has the money, now, and considerable influence as well, and such a man is not easily found—for our business—so he gets the lion's share with little, if any, risk."

"Strikes me he's considerable of what plain-spoken people would call a hog!" ventured the Fox, who had quickly detected Murray's ill used feeling against the boss.

The counterfeiter nodded a silent—perhaps unconscious—assent, and Fox continued:

"What sort is he personally?—outside of business, I mean."

"I don't care to say much, but don't you ever turn your back to him, if he has anything against you—not unless there are plenty of people close by," was the significant response.

"Great Scott! How I did hit the real character of that highly respected, strictly religious gentleman!" thought the delighted detective.

They were nearing Fox's headquarters. Murray appeared to be thinking deeply, and the detective gave free rein to his thoughts.

He was not a particularly religious man, but gave due respect to those who were, and now found himself suddenly filled with wrath against Dawson.

"Even if he did not murder Harney, the rascal should be exposed! I'll bring the villain to book, as sure as my name is Fox!"

They were now at the hotel and on entering found Dawson had grown tired of waiting and left for home some time before.

"Never mind—I'll go to his house, and call back for you after I've arranged matters. Then you can see some of the stuff to-night."

As Murray said this he started to leave the hotel, but, remembering his appointment with the lawyer, Fox stopped him saying:

"Since you are certain that there will be no difficulty, we'll let it go until to-morrow morning. It's not you, but this Dawson, that I've been doubting, and I'll let the alterations lie over until I see you in the morning. To-night I shall try to get some rest, for I got scarcely any last night or the night before."

"All right! I'll call after breakfast," agreed Murray, who had taken a fancy to Fox and was anxious to get him on any terms.

The detective immediately retired to his room, where he prepared for the appointment with lawyer Bullerton by assuming the disguise he had worn on arriving in Brookvale.

On visiting the lawyer's hotel—there were but two in the town—Fox was compelled to introduce himself to Mr. Bullerton, after



which he heard the latter's report of the interview with Thorpe.

"I really believe the young man is innocent, but for some mysterious reason he refuses to fully account for his whereabouts on the night of the murder, and I fear it will be useless for me to undertake the case."

That was Mr. Bullerton's report. Like Fox at the outset, the lawyer was evidently disgusted with the mysterious reticence he encountered when questioning both Thorpe and Jessie.

Fox smiled at the lawyer's disgusted tone, and then proceeded to relate what he had discovered regarding Dawson's double life, the threatening scrap of paper, and the intimacy between Dawson and Harney beginning just as that between the latter and Thorpe was broken off.

Mr. Bullerton listened with a look of amazement, and when the detective had finished remained silent for several minutes before asking:

"You think Dawson was concerned in the murder, do you not, Mr. Fox?"

"I do, most assuredly."

"Well, certainly this story of the double life he has been leading, and that threatening scrap of paper, together with his former attentions to Miss Harney, puts another face on the affair. Still, one would imagine that Thorpe—not Harney—would be the object of an attack by Dawson."

"Very true, Mr. Bullerton, but, as you see, the threat contained in that scrap of paper is directed at the murdered man. At all events, it was in his pocket, and Thorpe admits that it looks as if it referred to himself and Miss Harney."

"I cannot understand this strange silence, on points of vital importance, which these two young people preserve," muttered the lawyer, evidently thinking aloud, and then addressing the detective, exclaimed:

"Why, the very fact that he refuses to account for his movements between eleven and twelve o'clock, will be sufficient to convict him!"

"Then we must do as Miss Harney advises: make him do it!" returned Fox.

"But how? If I ask him that question on the stand, and he refuses to answer, no power on earth can save him!"

"No doubt you are right, Mr. Bullerton, but suppose we ask the person with whom he spent that hour, instead of asking him?"

"Ah, yes—that would probably cause him to talk; but, how are we to find that other person? He won't tell, and nobody seems to have seen him after he left Harney."

"Mr. Bullerton, I've an idea that if Jessie Harney is placed on the stand, and told that Frank Thorpe's life depends upon her, she can and will account for the missing hour."

"Yes, I feel certain that there is some connection between Jessie's strange behavior, and Thorpe's refusal to fully account for his movements on the night of the murder," added Fox, in response to the astonished lawyer's questioning stare.

"By Jupiter, that never struck me!" exclaimed Bullerton, and after a moment added:

"It's possible you've hit upon the truth, and I'm going to feel my way a little on that theory to-morrow."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE VAILED LADY.

On the morning following the consultation with the lawyer, Fox awaited the appearance of Murray with a curious and unusual feeling of doubt and impatience.

Notwithstanding the positive assertion of the captain to the contrary, the detective felt that there would be some difficulty in obtaining the confidence of the "boss" counterfeiter—and he was right.

About ten o'clock Murray entered the hotel,

and even before he spoke, the keen-eyed detective saw that there was something wrong.

"I can't understand what the trouble is," the counterfeiter began, "but the 'boss' won't talk about going into the scheme for another week or two. Didn't want me even to let you know he was back of us, but, of course, it was too late to say that—though I didn't tell him so."

"Oh, it don't matter; I'll go on as I intended," carelessly returned Fox.

"But you'll come in when he's ready to talk business?" asked Murray, anxiously.

"I don't know about that. I'm not used to waiting on other people's convenience."

"Come, now! Don't say you won't!" coaxed the counterfeiter.

"Well, we'll talk about it when the time comes. Meantime, I shall go on preparing to go it alone," answered Fox.

This appeared to reassure Murray, and he left for the Old Mill feeling somewhat safer than when he left Dawson that morning with the warning ringing in his ears:

"Don't dare do anything with that man, until I give permission! And, above all things, don't mention my name!"

The latter part of the warning, as Murray had observed, had been given too late, though the captain had been careful not to reveal that fact.

As he had observed, the fierce little counterfeiter was perplexed by the changes—frequent as they were opposite—in Dawson's moods for the past few days.

"He's acting like a lunatic," growled Murray to himself, as he started for the Old Mill. "Yesterday he wanted this man, Fox. To day, he says don't touch him! Hanged if I know what to make of it!"

"And now he's talking about bringing a girl there, but I'll be jiggered if I don't chuck the thing, if there's any women coming into it!"

Thus protesting against the changes which were constantly coming over Dawson, of late, the captain reached headquarters feeling anything but pleased with the condition of affairs, and half-tempted to throw up the whole business.

About noon a carriage came dashing up to the Old Mill, and from it descended a closely veiled lady, accompanied by Dawson.

Hurriedly entering the old building, Dawson escorted the lady to the rear room, then stepped to the trap door, and summoned Murray by a peculiar stamping on the floor.

"You must be careful about approaching the rear room—there's a lady in it," he said.

Murray stared, then flushed angrily, and finally, after a few minutes' hesitation, exclaimed:

"Well, that settles it! You'll have to get some other fool to run this game!"

"What do you mean?" angrily demanded Dawson.

"That I won't run any more risk than I have been running!"

"Explain yourself!"

"Well, we're taking risk enough, without having a woman in it. If she stays, I go!"

This seemed to enrage Dawson, and with a savage oath he ordered:

"Then the quicker you get out the better off you are likely to be!"

"I'm ready! Just fork over five hundred and forty, and I'll quit!"

"Not a penny! You are lucky to get off as you are!"

Murray's right hand sought his hip pocket, but restraining himself he smiled—an unpleasant smile it was—and walked out saying:

"Very well, Mr. Dawson! Don't forget that I know a thing or two that it would be worth five times—yes, fifty times five hundred and forty to have kept quiet!"

The boss grew deadly pale, but it was from fury not fear. His eyes fairly blazed

as he gazed after Murray, now walking leisurely toward the town.

The latter's apparent coolness was only apparent. Inwardly he was raging over Dawson's unjust and arbitrary conduct, and when out of sight of the mill increased his pace to a speed more suited to his feelings.

"If he was the only one who would suffer, I'd give the whole business to the police," muttered Murray as he drew near the town.

"That wouldn't do, however, so, I'll have to think of some other way of getting square with that scoundrel! He's protected himself so carefully that it will be a hard job to hurt him but it'll be funny if I don't manage it in some way, curse him! The hypocritical wretch will live to rue this morning's work!"

"Ah! I have it! This woman will be the instrument through which I shall reach him."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### JESSIE MAKES A JOURNEY.

AFTER Murray's departure for the Old Mill, Fox decided to occupy himself that morning with the alterations in the store, in which he pretended to be about starting the clothing business.

A business of some kind was absolutely necessary to avert suspicion, and as the detective's next move would depend to a great extent upon the lawyer's report of his second interview with Thorpe, Fox determined to avoid meeting Jessie until he had heard from the former.

"Then, if he fails with the man, I'll try my luck with the woman," thought Fox, as he started for the store.

About noon, having put in a couple hours with the owner of the store, Fox managed to assume the iron gray beard, and change his coat and hat unobserved, and, then, called at Bullerton's hotel.

The lawyer had just returned from the county jail, and looked somewhat more cheerful than at the first interview.

"Well, I sprung it on him, and, though I did not secure an absolute confirmation that I was—or rather, that you were correct regarding the person with whom he spent that hour, I am satisfied that it was with Miss Harney."

"Then you must put her on the stand, and put your questions regardless of consequences, for from the way she speaks of that hour, and his silence regarding it, I'm inclined to think that during that time something occurred which he thinks would injure Miss Harney if made public, while she is probably bound by a promise not to speak without his permission."

Bullerton looked admiringly at the speaker and exclaimed:

"You are a genius, Mr. Fox! You speak so confidently that I'm beginning to think the case is not so hopeless after all."

"Glad to hear it, Mr. Bullerton, for I believe that confidence in one's cause is half the battle," declared Fox, adding:

"And, now, I'll call on Miss Jessie, and see how I can work on her."

"Good idea! Let me learn how you make out as soon as possible, that I may know how to act when I call to make my report."

Fox nodded assent, and departed, but returned within a short time, looking angry and perplexed, and in response to the lawyer's questioning gaze exclaimed:

"More mystery! Miss Jessie left home in a carriage this morning, taking a sachel with her, and leaving word for her aunt, (who was not up at the time) that she might not return to-night!"

Bullerton looked amazed, and after a few minutes' thought, asked:

"What do you think of it? Can it be that all this trouble has affected her brain?"

"I don't know what to make of it. The first thing to be done is to find her, I've al-



ady endeavored to ascertain who owned the carriage, but no one seems to have recognized it."

"Can I be of any assistance?"

"Not at present. I'll go to the depot first and see what's to be learned there. She could scarcely leave without being recognized."

"Very true. It will not be so difficult to trace her, after all," rejoined Bullerton.

Mr. Bullerton spoke quite confidently, but he was mistaken, as the first day's search proved.

"If the earth had opened and swallowed her, she could not have disappeared more completely and mysteriously," reported Fox that night.

He had not been able to obtain the slightest trace of Jessie, after the carriage left the Harney residence, going in the direction of the depot.

"Which was probably a blind," said Fox, "for I've talked with every one in and about the depot, and neither she, nor a carriage such as she left in, had been seen there."

"It's very strange!" muttered Bullerton.

"Strange! Everything connected with the case is strange."

"Well, what's the next move?"

"I scarcely know. Our own clients handicap us at every step, and thwart every effort to help them. As that girl must be found, I shall have to drop Dawson."

"Yes; unless I—"

"No, no! It's known already that you are her lawyer—to Dawson, at all events—and you would only alarm him," interrupted Fox.

"Then, what can be done?"

"Just keep quiet. Thorpe's trial will not take place for another month, so we have plenty of time."

But, like Bullerton, the detective was sorely mistaken.

Day after day, week after week, passed, but when the night before the trial arrived, nothing more had been learned of Jessie's whereabouts than was known at the outset!

The Fox had hunted everywhere, and on the rather wild idea that Dawson might have induced Jessie to visit his house, and then held her captive, burglariously entered the "boss" counterfeiter's handsome residence, and searched it from cellar to roof.

No Jessie, or trace of Jessie, was found, however, and now it was the eve of Thorpe's trial—without a scrap of evidence to support the prisoner's plea of "Not guilty."

"I don't see that you can do anything except have the trial adjourned," said Fox to the lawyer that evening.

"But, what good will that do? The man might save himself, but seems even more careless of doing so, now, than when I first called on him."

"Well, get it, anyhow. Time is our only hope," returned the detective.

"All right! I'll try, and if the State don't oppose too strongly, can probably have it go over until the next term."

"Do your best. Something may turn up to help us out, if we can only secure a little more time."

"I'll do my best!" assured Bullerton—although he had really little hope of success.

Leaving the lawyer, Fox returned to his hotel. He was walking slowly—thinking deeply over the many queer features of the case in hand—when every sense was startled into alertness by the sight of an angry meeting between two men: Dawson and Murray.

The ex-captain of the counterfeiters had not been seen in Brookvale, since the morning he had quit the Old Mill, and Fox's heart leaped when, as he drew near the pair, he heard Murray say:

"Laugh away, Mr. Dawson, laugh away!"

But, look out for yourself! I've got time to square things, now, and I'll begin by making you get rid—give up that girl!"

## CHAPTER XIX.

### SAVING A LIFE.

MURRAY's threatening words had the same effect on Dawson as a red flag would have on an angry bull. With a savage oath, the boss leaped at the ex-captain, striking at him with a heavy bowie-knife.

It was quite late—nearly eleven o'clock; no one but Fox was in sight of the former confederates, and, taken off his guard, Murray would, certainly, have been stricken down had not the alert detective interfered.

So engaged were the quarreling pair, that when Dawson struck at Murray, the Fox had approached within ten feet of them unperceived, and as the knife was raised he leaped like a fox at the hand that held it.

It was a good jump, but the man making it seemed one bundle of muscles, and came against Dawson with tremendous force, his outstretched fist sending the latter reeling into the gutter.

Fox, too, fell from the force of the collision, but quickly regaining his feet, said:

"Better come along before that fellow comes to, Murray."

The ex-counterfeiter stared at his savior in astonishment, for nearly a minute, and then, extended his hand exclaiming:

"That's one I owe you, Fox! I'd have been cold meat, I reckon, but for you."

"That's all right! Come along to the hotel with me."

"Yes, it's all right, and I'll go along, but that don't alter the facts, and if there's anything Bill Murray can do to square things with you, just say the word."

"Look out, look out—that's a rash sort of an offer!" laughingly warned Fox.

"Rash or not, you'll find it's in dead earnest if you'll accept it!"

"Well, we'll see about that later. Just at present, I want you to come to my room, and have a smoke."

"I'm your mutton—go ahead!"

In a few minutes both were seated in Fox's room, smoking and talking, the late encounter with Dawson naturally furnishing the subject of conversation.

"He seemed to go mad when you mentioned something about a girl," remarked Fox.

"Yes," assented Murray, "and he came so quick that he'd have caught me but for you."

"You must have touched a tender spot."

"Hanged if I know! All I know about it is that the morning I last saw you, she came and I quit."

"The very morning Jessie disappeared!" thought Fox, while aloud he asked:

"You don't mean to say that he brought a girl in among you?"

"That's just what I do mean to say! And, as I told you the minute I found out—he told me—she was there, I chucked up the business. We were running risk enough without that, I told him—and so we were, while he lived in luxury without any risk."

"Then you're out of the business?" carelessly questioned Fox.

"Yes—and for good! He beat me out of five hundred and forty cold cases, but I've got a little pile stowed away for the missus and youngsters—and I'll make him sweat blood for dumping me out of the rest."

Fox remained silent, mentally debating whether it would be safe to reveal himself to Murray, and the latter continued:

"He kept my 'stuff' out of spite, but you can bet there's other people interested in that girl, and it's ten to one that, if I can find 'em, I'll get my money, as well as squaring things with him."

This decided the detective. Watching Murray sharply, he said:

"You're right about that, my boy, and I can put you right in the way of both money and revenge—if you feel that way?"

"You can! How?"

"Well, I happen to know that there's a detective looking for that girl (or one that disappeared the same day,) and as she's an important witness in a murder case, I guess you wouldn't have any trouble in getting about five hundred, besides squaring accounts with Dawson."

The ex-counterfeiter looked astonished at this, and the detective continued:

"You'll be perfectly safe in dealing with this man. He don't care two straws about the counterfeiting, but he does care a lot about finding the girl. If you like, I'll put you in communication with him."

"What's the matter with dealing with the girl's relatives? I don't like dealing with detectives. Might come back on the boys by and by, you know."

"She hasn't any relatives except a poor old aunt, and if you decide to give him what you know, I'll guarantee that this detective won't harm you or the others."

Murray looked puzzled by this confident statement, and asked:

"How the deuce can you do that?"

"If I tell you, will you agree to tell him—make a bargain with him?"

"Yes!"

"Well, I'm the man!"

With an oath Murray sprung to his feet, his right hand seeking his hip pocket, while he stared at Fox, and gasped:

"You're joking!"

"Not a bit of it, my boy! Sit down—there's nothing to get excited about."

Fox's quiet demeanor seemed to reassure the ex-counterfeiter, who, withdrawing his hand from his pocket, resumed his seat, still staring inquiringly at his companion.

"Now, then, fire away!" smilingly invited Fox. "Where's the girl? and will you give me a hand in recovering her? The five hundred is yours the moment she's safe."

Murray hesitated a few moments, and finally answered by asking:

"What about my old pals? I don't want to hurt them."

"Nor do I! If I did, I would have raided the Old Mill the morning I escaped from the whole lot of you."

"Yes, I'm the man, but you've nothing to fear from me. My game runs higher than counterfeiting, but your friends will have to move within twenty-four hours after the girl's release."

"That's good enough!" exclaimed Murray in a tone of relief, adding:

"As you know all about the mill business already, I ain't giving away anybody except Dawson—curse him! when I tell you that the girl's there—in the rear room."

"Good! Now, will you help to get her?"

"How?"

"By keeping your friends quiet while I am getting her out."

"Certainly! When will you start?"

Fox considered the question for a few moments. He had Murray in a talking mood, and might learn something of Dawson's movements on the night of the murder, so he replied:

"We will wait until dawn. Your friends will be quitting about that time, and I need see nothing."

"By the way, does Dawson ever visit the place at night?"

"Not very often."

"I don't suppose anybody knows of his connection with the gang—any outsider?"

"One man did, I think."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I think Jack Harney dropped to the other fellow's game. They had a terrible jawing match about eleven o'clock that night. We could hear the row in the cellar, and I came up to see what was going on."



"That stopped the row, and poor Harney went out, just as I started back to work."

"What leads you to think Harney knew of the fellow's game?"

"Why, you see, I shouldn't have showed myself at all, for they were close to the trap-door—and wouldn't have done so only for the tremendous row, they were making. Well, if you didn't know what was going on below, you'd be apt to look a bit surprised to see a chap stick his head through a trap-door right alongside o' you—wouldn't you?"

"Yes. Didn't Harney?"

"Not a bit, and Dawson never said a word about it, though I expected to get a blowing up for giving away the trap-door snap."

"Now," thought the delighted detective, "now, Mr. Dawson, I'm bringing this business pretty close to your door," and aloud:

"Are sure it was eleven, Murray?"

"Well, I said about eleven, but, to be exact, it was a quarter after when the row reached us below, and just half past eleven when I went up the ladder. I was timing some stuff that I was melting, and had my watch in my hand all that quarter hour, so I'm sure of what I say."

For once the usually impenetrable face revealed Fox's delight as he thought:

"That settles Thorpe's case! He can prove being home at twelve, and Harney was alive at half past eleven over four miles from Thorpe's house."

"What does all this mean? What are you so blamed tickled about?" asked Murray.

Fox laughed outright, then gravely answered:

"Murray, you have rendered me a most important service. Now, will you complete the good work by swearing to what you've just told me, and save the life of an innocent man?"

The counterfeiter looked troubled, and Fox pressed the question:

"Without you it will be difficult, perhaps impossible, to prove Thorpe innocent. I have promised that neither you, nor your friends should be troubled, otherwise I would lock up all hands until their evidence was given. Don't make me regret my promise—and be sure that I will protect you."

Murray's countenance began to clear, and after a minute's reflection, he asked:

"Are you sure this Thorpe is innocent—that my testimony will prove him so?"

"Positive! Not only that, but it will help me to fix the crime on the right man—Harvey Dawson!"

"What?" cried Murray leaping from his seat.

"Yes, with your testimony, I will come pretty near placing a pair of iron bracelets on Mr. Harvey Dawson's wrists," calmly replied Fox.

All hesitation on Murray's part now disappeared, and he promptly declared his willingness to give the required evidence.

"But, if you can get one of your friends to corroborate your testimony, it will be better, for he (Dawson) will swear it's spite on your part," said Fox, after thanking the ex-counterfeiter.

"That's all right, sir! While you're getting the girl, I'll find the man," promptly assured the little fellow, who never did things by halves.

"You'll never regret this, Murray," warmly returned the detective.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE END.

FOUR o'clock in the morning. The gray dawn is just announcing the coming of the day following the agreement between Fox and Murray, when the two oddly united, yet widely separated, friends enter the Old Mill.

"They're just about quitting now, so either get out right away, or stay in there fifteen or twenty minutes. I'll come and

knock, if the door's closed, so you'll neither see, nor be seen."

As Murray whispered the foregoing, he pointed to a door in the rear of the building, on approaching which both heard the voices of two people conversing.

It was not a pleasant conversation, and the door being a little open every word was heard by Fox and Murray, both of whom at once recognized the voice of Dawson in the following:

"I tell you, Jessie, this man must take his chances! If you should attempt to help him by going on the stand as a witness, the whole story of the negro taint, and your relationship to him, would certainly be brought out."

"But his life may depend upon me!" protested Jessie, with tears in her voice.

"It can't be helped," was the harsh reply.

"He's got a first-class lawyer, and stands a fair chance for his life without exposing the skeleton in our closet," added Dawson.

"A fair chance for his life," moaned Jessie, "and I am able to prove him innocent! My God!"

"Come, come! Stop this infernal nonsense! The fellow would laugh at you—spit in your face—if he heard such sentimental rot!"

As Dawson uttered this brutal speech, Murray whispered:

"I'm pretty sure the rest of the men have quit, and I can't stand any more of that brute's abuse of that poor girl. Go in and take her—and him, too! I'll stand by you."

On the impulse of the moment, Fox pushed open the door and entered the room.

Sitting in a low rocking-chair was Jessie Harney, her face buried in her hands, weeping bitterly, while in front of her stood Dawson evidently about to depart.

The "boss" counterfeiter turned quickly on hearing Fox's footsteps, and on seeing the latter reached for his pistol, at the same time savagely exclaiming:

"You sneaking hound! What means this intrusion?"

"Drop that!" sternly ordered Fox. "Drop it, or I'll drop you."

He had his pistol in hand when entering, and now held the counterfeiter covered.

Perceiving this, Dawson dropped his revolver, and pulling out a pair of handcuffs, the detective called:

"Here, Murray! Put these bracelets on this ruffian."

With a malicious grin, the ex-counterfeiter took the handcuffs, and advanced toward his superior.

It was not to be, however. Dawson was not fated to be handcuffed.

"Stand back, you treacherous scoundrel!" he cried, and turning to Fox demanded:

"What does this mean?"

"It means that you are arrested for the murder of John Harney!" replied Fox.

Dawson became deadly pale, and desperation flashed from his eyes, as the detective continued:

"Go ahead, Murray!"

The ex-counterfeiter advanced to obey the order, but, unfortunately, stepped between Dawson and Fox. The next instant there came a warning shriek from Jessie, who had been looking and listening in amazed silence.

The warning came too late. As Jessie cried out, Dawson had whipped a dagger from his bosom, and, leaping like a tiger upon Murray, drove the blade in his former confederate's shoulder. Then, turning upon Fox, the murderer made a spring at him but fell back with a bullet in his brain.

He was not quite dead, and thinking he might want to say something, Fox gave him a little brandy.

The liquor revived the murderer, who whispered:

"Get a justice—there's one—down the road—a little. More brandy."

As Fox administered the stimulant, a man

who had been attracted by the pistol-sound entered the mill, and was immediately dispatched for the justice.

"Write!" whispered Dawson, and taking out his note-book the detective wrote:

"I killed Jack Harney. He had discovered the counterfeiting down-stairs, and this made him doubt a story which I had imposed upon him and his half-sister, Jessie—that she had negro blood in her veins, and was in reality only an adopted daughter of Jack's step-father. This was to break off the intimacy between Thorpe and Jessie. To make sure, I added that Jessie was generally supposed to be the illegitimate daughter of Thorpe's father!"

"As the elder Harney was a Southerner, and a close friend of the elder Thorpe, the story was believed until Jack discovered my secret. That was the day previous to the murder. That night he swore he would investigate my story."

"We quarreled here in the mill, and in the excitement he forgot his cane. I ran after him with it—but, remembering all that he had said, and all that he had threatened to do, killed him."

The justice arrived just as this slowly and painfully uttered statement was finished. Another dose of brandy enabled the murderer to sign it, and then he fell back soon to breathe his last.

Little remains to be told.

Frank Thorpe was promptly liberated—the most astonished man in the thoroughly astonished town of Brookvale.

To Fox, who was under arrest for a couple of hours, and was then released, Thorpe revealed the fact that having received a hint from Harney, he had sought Jessie, after leaving her brother, and spent the missing hour trying to induce her to tell him what was wrong.

Jessie had refused to make any explanation, assuring him that there could not be anything—not even acquaintance between them—that his very presence there that night threatened her with disgrace.

All because Dawson had threatened to tell his story, if he heard of another visit from Thorpe.

Thus was the strange reticence of both parties explained.

Of course Jessie and Frank were married, and, of course, Farrel the Fox was one of the most honored guests.

"Have you ever been able to find out why Miss Harney took up her residence in the Old Mill?" Mr. Bullerton asked the Fox just previous to the marriage.

"Yes. That hypocritical villain assured her that if she remained within reach of the law, she would be dragged to the witness stand where her secret—or rather his lying story—would be forced from her—and that that would hurt Thorpe."

"I think he must have suspected that Jessie's testimony would save Thorpe, and wished to prevent her from consulting you," replied Fox, adding:

"But Murray would have saved us that trouble."

"Yes, he would have been a valuable witness. By the way, what has become of him?"

"Gone to New York to bring his family here. They have no idea of what has been his business, and will suppose he has always been a clothing merchant, for he is going to take the store which I hired, for the wound from Dawson's blade, though an ugly one, left no permanent injury."

"Good idea! What's become of the rest?"

"The gang got frightened, and following Murray's example, will try how it feels to earn an honest living—for a while, anyhow."

So ended the most mysterious case ever encountered by Farrel, the Fox.

THE END.



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BEADLE AND ADAMS, Publishers,  
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